THE LITTLE MINISTER

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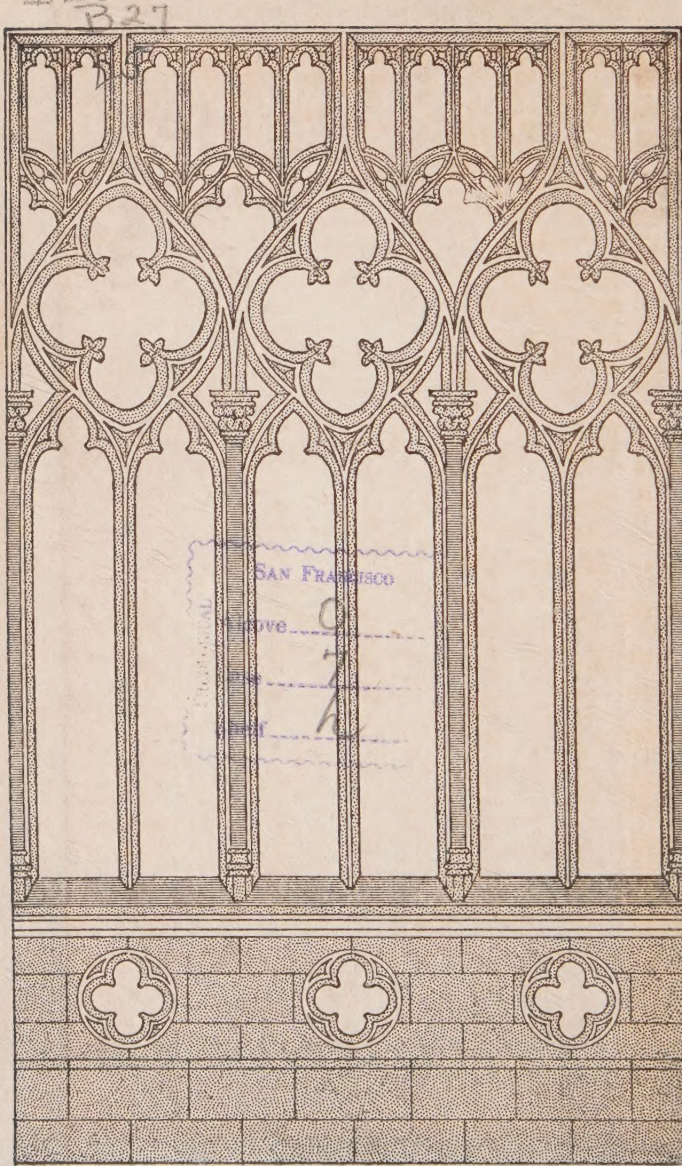

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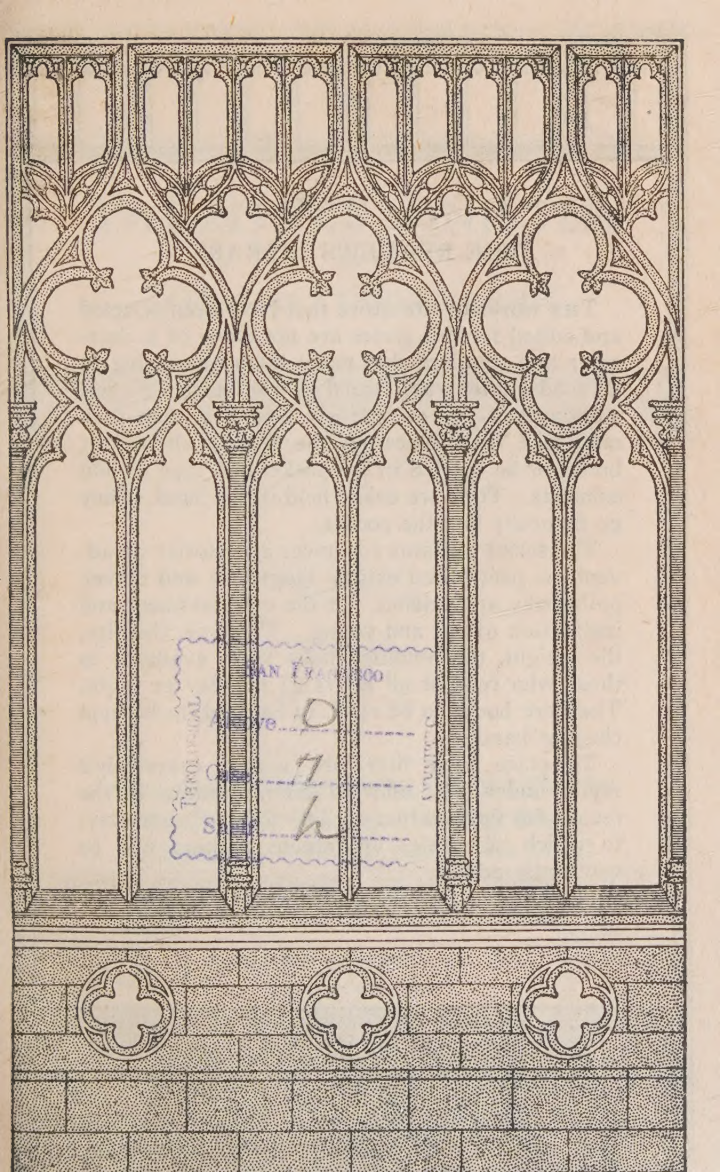
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THE LITTLE MINISTER

BY

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THE LITTLE MINISTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOVE-LIGHT.

LONG ago, in the days when our caged blackbirds never saw a king's soldier without whistling impudently, "Come ower the water to Charlie," a minister of Thrums was to be married, but something happened, and he remained a bachelor. Then, when he was old, he passed in our square the lady who was to have been his wife, and her hair was white, but she, too, was still unmarried. The meeting had only one witness, a weaver, and he said solemnly afterwards, "They didna speak, but they just gave one another a look, and I saw the love-light in their een." No more is remembered of these two, no being now living ever saw them, but the poetry that was in the soul of a battered weaver makes them human to us for ever.

It is of another minister I am to tell, but only to those who know that light when they see it. I am not bidding good-bye to many readers, for though it is true that some men, of whom Lord Rintoul was one, live to an old age without knowing love, few of us can have met them, and of women so incomplete I never heard.

Gavin Dishart was barely twenty-one when he and his mother came to Thrums, light-hearted like the traveller who knows not what awaits him at the bend of the road. It was the time of year when the ground is carpeted beneath the firs with brown needles, when split-nuts patter all day from the beech, and children lay yellow corn on the dominie's desk to remind him that now they are needed in the fields. The day was so silent that carts could be heard rumbling a mile away. All Thrums was out in its wynds and closes—a few of the weavers still in knee-breeches—to look at the new Auld Licht minister. I was there, too, the dominie of Glen Quharity, which is four miles from Thrums; and heavy was

my heart as I stood afar off so that Gavin's mother migh not have the pain of seeing me. I was the only one in the crowd who looked at her more than at her son.

Eighteen years had passed since we parted. Already he hair had lost the brightness of its youth, and she seemed t me smaller and more fragile; and the face that I loved whe I was a hobbledehoy, and loved when I looked once mor upon it in Thrums, and always shall love till I die, was sof and worn. Margaret was an old woman, and she was onl forty-three: and I am the man who made her old. As Gavi put his eager, boyish face out at the carriage window, man saw that he was holding her hand, but none could be glad a the sight as the dominie was glad, looking on at a happines in which he dared not mingle. Margaret was crying becaus she was so proud of her boy. Women do that. Poor son to be proud of, good mothers, but I would not have you dr those tears.

When the little minister looked out at the carriage windo many of the people drew back humbly, but a little boy in red frock with black spots pressed forward and offered hi a sticky parly, which Gavin accepted, though not witho a tremor, for children were more terrible to him then tha bearded men. The boy's mother, trying not to look elate bore him away, but her face said that he was made for lif With this little incident Gavin's career in Thrums began. remembered it suddenly the other day when wading acro the wynd where it took place. Many scenes in the litt minister's life come back to me in this way. The first tim I ever thought of writing his love story as an old man's gi to a little maid since grown tall, was one night while sat alone in the schoolhouse; on my knees a fiddle that h been my only living companion since I sold my hens. M mind had drifted back to the first time I saw Gavin a the Egyptian together, and what set it wandering to th midnight meeting was my garden gate shaking in the win At a gate on the hill I had first encountered these two. rattled in his hand, and I looked up and saw them, a neither knew why I had such cause to start at the sig Then the gate swung to. It had just such a click as mi

These two figures on the hill are more real to me th things that happened yesterday, but I do not know that I c make them live to others. A ghost-show used to come yea to Thrums on the merry Muckle Friday, in which the illusi was contrived by hanging a glass between the onlookers a

the stage. I cannot deny that the comings and goings of the ghost were highly diverting, yet the farmer of T'nowhead only laughed because he had paid his money at the hole in the door like the rest of us. T'nowhead sat at the end of a form where he saw round the glass and so saw no ghost. I fear my public may be in the same predicament. I see the little minister as he was at one and twenty, and the little girl to whom this story is to belong sees him, though the things I have to tell happened before she came into the world. But there are reasons why she should see; and I do not know that I can provide the glass for others. If they see round it, they will neither laugh nor cry with Gavin and Babbie.

When Gavin came to Thrums he was as I am now, for the pages lay before him on which he was to write his life. Yet he was not quite as I am. The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write one story, and writes another; and his humblest hour is when he compares the volume as it is with what he vowed to make it. But the biographer sees the last chapter while he is still at the first, and I have only to write over with ink what Gavin has written in pencil.

How often is it a phantom woman who draws the man from the way he meant to go? So was man created, to hunger for the ideal that is above himself, until one day there is magic in the air, and the eyes of a girl rest upon him. He does not know that it is he himself who crowned her, and if the girl is as pure as he, their love is the one form of idolatry that is not quite ignoble. It is the joining of two souls on their way to God. But if the woman be bad, the test of the man is when he wakens from his dream. The nobler his ideal, the further will he have been hurried down the wrong way, for those who only run after little things will not go far. His love may now sink into passion, perhaps only to stain its wings and rise again, perhaps to drown.

Babbie, what shall I say of you to make me write these things? I am not your judge. Shall we not laugh at the student who chafes when between him and his book comes the song of the thrushes, with whom, on the mad night you danced into Gavin's life, you had more in common than with Auld Licht ministers? The gladness of living was in your step, your voice was melody, and he was wondering what love might be.

You were the daughter of a summer night, born where all the birds are free, and the moon christened you with her

soft light to dazzle the eyes of man. Not our little ministe alone was stricken by you into his second childhood. T look upon you was to rejoice that so fair a thing could be to think of you is still to be young. Even those who calle you a little devil, of whom I have been one, admitted tha in the end you had a soul, though not that you had beer born with one. They said you stole it, and so made a woma of yourself. But again I say I am not your judge, and whe I picture you as Gavin saw you first, a bare-legged witc dancing up Windyghoul, rowan berries in your black hair and on your finger a jewel the little minister could not have bought with five years of toil, the shadows on my pages lift and I cannot wonder that Gavin loved you.

Often I say to myself that this is to be Gavin's story, no mine. Yet must it be mine, too, in a manner, and of mysel I shall sometimes have to speak; not willingly, for it is tim my little tragedy had died of old age. I have kept it t myself so long that now I would stand at its grave alone. I is true that when I heard who was to be the new minister hoped for a day that the life broken in Harvie might b mended in Thrums, but two minutes' talk with Gavin showe me that Margaret had kept from him the secret which wa hers and mine, and so knocked the bottom out of my vai hopes. I did not blame her then, nor do I blame her now, nc shall any one who blames her ever be called friend by me but it was bitter to look at the white manse among the tree and know that I must never enter it. For Margaret's sak I had to keep aloof, yet this new trial came upon me lik our parting at Harvie. I thought that in those eighteen yea my passions had burned like a ship till they sank, but I su fered again as on that awful night when Adam Disha came back, nearly killing Margaret and tearing up all m ambitions by the root in a single hour. I waited in Thrum until I had looked again on Margaret, who thought me dea and Gavin, who had never heard of me, and then I trudge back to the schoolhouse. Something I heard of them fro time to time during the winter,—for in the gossip of Thrur I was well posted,—but much of what is to be told here only learned afterwards from those who knew it be Gavin heard of me at times as the dominie in the glen w had ceased to attend the Auld Licht kirk, and Margaret c not even hear of me. It was all I could do for them.

CHAPTER II.

RUNS ALONGSIDE THE MAKING OF A MINISTER.

On the east coast of Scotland, hidden, as if in a quarry, at the foot of cliffs that may one day fall forward, is a village called Harvie. So has it shrunk since the day when I sulked from it that I hear of a traveller's asking lately at one of its doors how far he was from a village; yet Harvie throve once and was celebrated even in distant Thrums for its fish. Most of our weavers would have thought it as unnatural not to buy harvies in the square on the Muckle Friday, as to let Saturday night pass without laying in a sufficient stock of halfpennies to go round the family twice.

Gavin was born in Harvie, but left it at such an early age that he could only recall thatched houses with nets drying on the roofs, and a sandy shore in which coarse grass grew. In the picture he could not pick out the house of his birth, though he might have been able to go to it had he ever returned to the village. Soon he learned that his mother did not care to speak of Harvie, and perhaps he thought that she had forgotten it, too, all save one scene to which his memory still guided him. When his mind wandered to Harvie, Gavin saw the door of his home open and a fisherman enter, who scratched his head and then said, "Your man's drowned, missis." Gavin seemed to see many women crying, and his mother staring at them with a face suddenly painted white, and next to hear a voice that was his own saying, "Never mind, mother; I'll be a man to you now, and I'll need breeks for the burial." But Adam required no funeral, for his body lay deep in the sea.

Gavin thought that this was the tragedy of his mother's life, and the most memorable event of his own childhood. But it was neither. When Margaret, even after she came to Thrums, thought of Harvie, it was not at Adam's death she shuddered, but at the recollection of me.

It would ill become me to take a late revenge on Adam Dishart now by saying what is not true of him. Though he died a fisherman, he was a sailor for a great part of his life, and doubtless his recklessness was washed into him on the high seas, where in his time men made a crony of death, and drank merrily over dodging it for another night.

To me his roars of laughter without cause were as repellent as a boy's drum; yet many faces that were long in my company brightened at his coming, and women, with whom, despite my yearning, I was in no wise a favourite, ran to their doors to listen to him as readily as to the bellman. Children scurried from him if his mood was savage, but to him at all other times, while me they merely disregarded. There was always a smell of the sea about him. He had a rolling gait, unless he was drunk, when he walked very straight, and before both sexes he boasted that any woman would take him for his beard alone.

Adam was drowned on Gavin's fourth birthday, a year after I had to leave Harvie. He was blown off his smack in a storm, and could not reach the rope his partner flung him. "It's no go, lad," he shouted; "so long, Jim," and sank.

A month afterwards Margaret sold her share in the smack, which was all Adam left her, and the furniture of the house was rouped. She took Gavin to Glasgow, where her only brother needed a housekeeper, and there mother and son remained until Gavin got his call to Thrums. During those seventeen years I lost knowledge of them as completely as Margaret had lost knowledge of me. On hearing of Adam's death I went back to Harvie to try to trace her, but she had feared this, and so told no one where she was going.

According to Margaret, Gavin's genius showed itself while he was still a child. He was born with a brow whose nobility impressed her from the first. It was a minister's brow, and though Margaret herself was no scholar, being as slow to read as she was quick at turning bannocks on the girdle, she decided, when his age was still counted by months, that the ministry had need of him.

Margaret's brother died, but she remained in his single room, and, ever with a picture of her son in a pulpit to repay her, contrived to keep Gavin at school. Everything a woman's fingers can do Margaret's did better than most; and among the wealthy people who employed her—would that I could have the teaching of the sons of such as were good to her in those hard days!—her gentle manner was spoken of. For though Margaret had no schooling, she was a lady at heart, moving and almost speaking as one ever in Harvie, where they did not perhaps like her the better for it.

At six Gavin hit another boy hard for belonging to the

Established Church, and at seven he could not lose himself in the Shorter Catechism. His mother expounded the Scriptures to him till he was eight, when he began to expound them to her. By this time he was studying the practical work of the pulpit as enthusiastically as ever medical student cut off a leg. From a front pew in the gallery Gavin watched the minister's every movement, noting that the first thing to do on ascending the pulpit is to cover your face with your hands, as if the exalted position affected you like a strong light, and the second to move the big Bible slightly, to show that the kirk officer, not having had a university education, could not be expected to know the very spot on which it ought to lie. It was noteworthy that the first prayer lasted longer than all the others, and that to read the intimations about the Bible-class and the collection elsewhere than immediately before the last Psalm would have been as sacrilegious as to insert the dedication to King James at the end of Revelation. Sitting under a minister justly honoured in his day, the boy was often some words in advance of him, not vainglorious of his memory, but fervent, eager, and regarding the preacher as hardly less sacred than the Book. Gavin was encouraged by his frightened yet admiring mother to saw the air from their pew as the minister sawed it in the pulpit, and two benedictions were pronounced twice a Sabbath in that church, in the same words, the same manner, and simultaneously.

When Gavin was twelve he went to the university, and also got a place in a shop as errand boy. He used to run through the streets between his work and his classes. Potatoes and salt fish, which could then be got at two pence the pound if bought by the half hundredweight, were his food. There was not always a good meal for two, yet when Gavin reached home at night there was generally something ready for him, and Margaret had supped "hours ago." Gavin's hunger urged him to fall to, but his love for his mother made him watchful.

"What did you have yourself, mother?" he would demand, suspiciously.

"Oh, I had a fine supper, I assure you."

"What had you?"

"I had potatoes, for one thing."

"And dripping?"

"You may be sure."

"Mother, you're cheating me. The dripping hasn't been touched since yesterday."

"I dinna—don't—care for dripping—no much."

Then would Gavin stride the room fiercely, a queer little figure.

"Do you think I'll stand this, mother? Will I let myself be pampered with dripping and every delicacy while you starve?"

"Gavin, I really dinna care for dripping."

"Then I'll give up my classes, and we can have butter."

"I assure you I'm no hungry. It's different wi' a growing laddie."

"I'm not a growing laddie," Gavin would say, bitterly; "but, mother, I warn you that not another bite passes my throat till I see you eating, too."

So Margaret had to take her seat at the table, and when she said "I can eat no more," Gavin retorted sternly, "Nor will I, for fine I see through you."

To Margaret it was happiness to sit through the long evenings sewing, and look over her work at Gavin as he read or wrote or recited to himself the learning of the schools. But she coughed every time the weather changed, and then Gavin would start.

"You must go to your bed, mother," he would say, tearing himself from his books; or he would sit beside her and talk of the dream that was common to both,—a dream of a manse where Margaret was mistress and Gavin was called the minister. Every night Gavin was at his mother's bedside to wind her shawl round her feet, and while he did it Margaret smiled.

"Mother, this is the chaff pillow you've taken out of my bed, and given me your feather one."

"Gavin, you needna change them. I winna have the feather pillow."

"Do you dare to think I'll let you sleep on chaff? Put up your head. Now, is that soft?"

"It's fine. I dinna deny but what I sleep better on feathers. Do you mind, Gavin, you bought this pillow for me the moment you got your bursary money?"

So the years passed, and soon Gavin would be a minister. He had now sermons to prepare, and every one of them was first preached to Margaret. How solemn was his voice, how his eyes flashed, how stern were his admonitions.

Not long before Gavin preached for our kirk and got his call, a great event took place in the little room at Glasgow. The student appeared for the first time before his mother in

his ministerial clothes. He wore the black silk hat, that was destined to become a terror to evil-doers in Thrums, and I dare say he was rather puffed up about himself that day. You would probably have smiled at him.

"It's a pity I'm so little, mother," he said with a sigh.

"You're no what I would call a particularly long man," Margaret said, "but you're just the height I like."

Then Gavin went out in his grandeur, and Margaret cried for an hour. She was thinking of me as well as of Gavin, and, as it happens, I know that I was thinking at the same time of her.

Busy days followed the call to Thrums, and Gavin had difficulty in forcing himself to his sermons when there was always something more to tell his mother about the weaving town they were going to, or about the manse or the furniture that had been transferred to him by the retiring minister. The little room which had become so familiar that it seemed one of a family party of three had to be stripped, and many of its contents were sold.

"Gavin, Gavin," Margaret said many times in those last days at Glasgow, "to think it has all come true!"

"Let the last word you say in the house be a prayer of thankfulness," she whispered to him when they were taking a final glance at the old home.

In the bare room they called the house, the little minister and his mother went on their knees, but, as it chanced, their last word there was not addressed to God.

"Gavin," Margaret whispered as he took her arm, "do you think this bonnet sets me?"

CHAPTER III.

THE NIGHT-WATCHERS.

What first struck Margaret in Thrums was the smell of the caddis. The town smells of caddis no longer, but whiffs of it may be got even now as one passes the houses of the old, where the lay still swings at little windows like a great ghost pendulum. To me it is a homely smell, which I draw in with a great breath, but it was as strange to Margaret as the weavers themselves, who, in their coloured nightcaps and corduroys streaked with threads, gazed at her and Gavin.

The little minister was trying to look severe and old, but twenty-one was in his eye.

"Look, mother, at that white house with the green roof. That is the manse."

When Margaret entered the manse on Gavin's arm, it was a whitewashed house of five rooms, with a garret in which the minister could sleep if he had guests, as during the Fast week. It stood with its garden within high walls, and the roof facing southward was carpeted with moss that shone in the sun in a dozen shades of green and yellow. Three firs guarded the house from west winds, but blasts from the north often tore down the steep fields and skirled through the manse, banging all its doors at once. A beech, growing on the east side, leant over the roof as if to gossip with the well in the courtyard. The garden was to the south, and was overfull of gooseberry and currant bushes. It contained a summer seat where strange things were soon to happen.

He in whose ways Gavin was to attempt the heavy task of walking had been a widower three months after his marriage, a man narrow when he came to Thrums, but so large-hearted when he left it that I, who know there is good in all the world because of the lovable souls I have met in this corner of it, yet cannot hope that many are as near to God as he. The most gladsome thing in the world is that few of us fall very low; the saddest that, with such capabilities, we seldom rise high. Of those who stand perceptibly above their fellows I have known very few; only Mr. Carfrae and two or three women.

Gavin only saw a very frail old minister who shook as he walked, as if his feet were striking against stones. He was to depart on the morrow to the place of his birth, but he came to the manse to wish his successor Godspeed. Strangers were so formidable to Margaret that she only saw him from her window.

"May you never lose sight of God, Mr. Dishart," the old man said in the parlour. Then he added, as if he had asked too much: "May you never turn from Him as I often did when I was a lad like you."

As this aged minister, with the beautiful face that God gives to all who love Him and follow His commandments, spoke of his youth, he looked wistfully round the faded parlour.

"It is like a dream," he said. "The first time I entered this room the thought passed through me that I would cut

down that cherry-tree, because it kept out the light, but, you see, it outlives me. I grew old while looking for the axe. Only yesterday I was the young minister, Mr. Dishart, and to-morrow you will be the old one, bidding good-bye to your successor."

His eyes came back to Gavin's eager face.

"You are very young, Mr. Dishart?"

"Nearly twenty-one."

"Twenty-one! Ah, my dear sir, you do not know how pathetic that sounds to me. Twenty-one! We are children for the second time at twenty-one, and again when we are gray and put all our burden on the Lord. The young talk generously of relieving the old of their burdens, but the anxious heart is to the old when they see a load on the back of the young. Let me tell you, Mr. Dishart, that I would condone many things in one and twenty now that I dealt hardly with at middle age. God Himself, I think, is very willing to give one and twenty a second chance."

"I am afraid," Gavin said, anxiously, "that I look even younger."

"I think," Mr. Carfrae answered, smiling, "that your heart is as fresh as your face; and that is well. The useless men are those who never change with the years. Many views that I held to in my youth and long afterwards are a pain to me now, and I am carrying away from Thrums memories of errors into which I fell at every stage of my ministry. When you are older you will know that life is a long lesson in humility."

He paused.

"I hope," he said, nervously, "that you don't sing the Paraphrases?"

Mr. Carfrae had not grown out of all his prejudices, you see; indeed, if Gavin had been less bigoted than he on this question they might have parted stiffly. The old minister would rather have remained to die in his pulpit than surrender it to one who read his sermons. Others may blame him for this, but I must say here plainly that I never hear a minister reading without wishing to send him back to college.

"I cannot deny," Mr. Carfrae said, "that I broke down more than once to-day. This forenoon I was in Tillyloss, for the last time, and it so happens that there is scarcely a house in it in which I have not had a marriage or prayed over a coffin. Ah, sir, these are the scenes that make the minister more than all his sermons. You must join the family,

Mr. Dishart, or you are only a minister once a week. And remember this, if your call is from above, it is a call to stay. Many such partings in a lifetime as I have had to-day would be too heartrending."

"And yet," Gavin said, hesitatingly, "they told me in Glasgow that I had received a call from the mouth of hell."

"Those were cruel words, but they only mean that people who are seldom more than a day's work in advance of want sometimes rise in arms for food. Our weavers are passionately religious, and so independent that they dare any one to help them, but if their wages were lessened they could not live. And so at talk of reduction they catch fire. Change of any kind alarms them, and though they call themselves Whigs, they rose a few years ago over the paving of the streets and stoned the workmen, who were strangers, out of the town.

"And though you may have thought the place quiet to-day, Mr. Dishart, there was an ugly outbreak only two months ago, when the weavers turned on the manufacturers for reducing the price of the web, made a bonfire of some of their doors, and terrified one of them into leaving Thrums. Under the command of some Chartists, the people next paraded the streets to the music of fife and drum, and six policemen who drove up from Tilliedrum in a light cart were sent back tied to the seats."

"No one has been punished?"

"Not yet, but nearly two years ago there was a similar riot, and the sheriff took no action for months. Then one night the square suddenly filled with soldiers, and the ringleaders were seized in their beds. Mr. Dishart, the people are determined not to be caught in that way again, and ever since the rising a watch has been kept by night on every road that leads to Thrums. The signal that the soldiers are coming is to be the blowing of a horn. If you ever hear that horn, I implore you to hasten to the square."

"The weavers would not fight?"

"You do not know how the Chartists have fired this part of the country. One misty day, a week ago, I was on the hill. I thought I had it to myself, when suddenly I heard a voice cry sharply, 'Shoulder arms.' I could see no one, and after a moment I put it down to a freak of the wind. Then all at once the mist before me blackened, and a body of men seemed to grow out of it. They were not shadows; they were Thrums weavers drilling, with pikes in their hands.

"They broke up," Mr. Carfrae continued, after a pause, "at my entreaty, but they have met again since then."

"And there were Auld Lichts among them?" Gavin asked. "I should have thought they would be frightened at our precentor, Lang Tammas, who seems to watch for backsliding in the congregation as if he had pleasure in discovering it."

Gavin spoke with feeling, for the precentor had already put him through his catechism, and it was a stiff ordeal.

"The precentor!" said Mr. Carfrae. "Why, he was one of them."

The old minister, once so brave a figure, tottered as he rose to go, and reeled in a dizziness until he had walked a few paces. Gavin went with him to the foot of the manse road; without his hat, as all Thrums knew before bedtime.

"I begin," Gavin said, as they were parting, "where you leave off, and my prayer is that I may walk in your ways."

"Ah, Mr. Dishart," the white-haired minister said, with a sigh, "the world does not progress so quickly as a man grows old. You only begin where I began."

He left Gavin, and then, as if the little minister's last words had hurt him, turned and solemnly pointed his staff upward. Such men are the strong nails that keep the world together.

The twenty-one-years-old minister returned to the manse somewhat sadly, but when he saw his mother at the window of her bedroom, his heart leapt at the thought that she was with him and he had eighty pounds a year. Gaily he waved both his hands to her, and she answered with a smile, and then, in his boyishness, he jumped over a gooseberry bush. Immediately afterwards he reddened and tried to look venerable, for while in the air he had caught sight of two women and a man watching him from the dyke. He walked severely to the door, and, again forgetting himself, was bounding upstairs to Margaret, when Jean, the servant, stood scandalised in his way.

"I don't think she caught me," was Gavin's reflection, and "The Lord preserve's!" was Jean's.

Gavin found his mother wondering how one should set about getting a cup of tea in a house that had a servant in it. He boldly rang the bell, and the willing Jean answered it so promptly (in a rush and jump) that Margaret was as much startled as Aladdin the first time he rubbed his lamp.

"There's a curran folk at the back door," Jean announced

later, "and their respects to you, and would you gie them some water out o' the well? It has been a drouth this aucht days, and the pumps is locked. Na," she said, as Gavin made a too liberal offer, "that would toom the well, and there's jimply enough for oursels. I should tell you, too, that three o' them is no Auld Lichts."

"Let that make no difference," Gavin said, grandly, but Jean changed his message to: "A bowlful apiece to Auld Lichts; all other denominations one cupful."

"Ay, ay," said Snecky Hobart, letting down the bucket, "and we'll include atheists among other denominations." The conversation came to Gavin and Margaret through the kitchen doorway.

"Dinna class Jo Cruickshanks wi' me," said Sam'l Langlands the U. P.

"Na, na," said Cruickshanks the atheist, "I'm ower independent to be religious. I dinna gang to the kirk to cry, 'Oh, Lord, gie, gie, gie.'"

"Take tent o' yoursel', my man," said Lang Tammas, sternly, "or you'll soon be whaur you would neifer the warld for a cup o' that cauld water."

"Maybe you've ower keen an interest in the devil, Tammas," retorted the atheist; "but, ony way, if it's heaven for climate, it's hell for company."

"Lads," said Snecky, sitting down on the bucket, "we'll send Mr. Dishart to Jo. He'll make another Rob Dow o' him."

"Speak mair reverently o' your minister," said the precentor. "He has the gift."

"I hinna naturally your solemn rasping word, Tammas, but in the heart I speak in all reverence. Lads, the minister has a word! I tell you he prays near like one giving orders."

"Ay, he can pray for a black frost as if it was ane o' the Royal Family. I ken his prayers, 'O Lord, let it haud for anither day, and keep the snaw awa'.' Will you pretend, Jeames, that Mr. Duthie could make onything o' Rob Dow?"

"I admit that Rob's awakening was an extraordinary thing, and sufficient to gie Mr. Dishart a name. But Mr. Carfrae was baffled wi' Rob, too."

"Jeames, if you had been in our kirk that day Mr. Dishart preached for't you would be wearying the now for Sabbath, to be back in't again. As you ken, that wicked man there, Jo Cruickshanks, got Rob Dow, drucken, cursing, poach-

ing Rob Dow, to come to the kirk to annoy the minister. Ay, he hadna been at that work for ten minutes when Mr. Dishart stopped in his first prayer and ga'e Rob a look. I couldna see the look, being in the precentor's box, but as sure as death I felt it boring through me. Rob is hard wood, though, and soon he was at his tricks again. Weel, the minister stopped a second time in the sermon, and so awful was the silence that a heap o' the congregation couldna keep their seats. I heard Rob breathing quick and strong. Mr. Dishart had his arm pointed at him a' this time, and at last he says, sternly 'Come forward.' Listen, Joseph Cruickshanks, and tremble. Rob gripped the board to keep himsel' frae obeying, and again Mr. Dishart says, 'Come forward,' and syne Rob rose, shaking, and tottered to the pulpit stair like a man suddenly shot into the Day of Judgment. 'You hulking man of sin,' cries Mr. Dishart, not a tick fleid, though Rob's as big as three o' him, 'sit down on the stair and attend to me, or I'll step doun frae the pulpit and run you out of the house of God.'"

"And since that day," said Hobart, "Rob has worshipped Mr. Dishart as a man that has stepped out o' the Bible. When the carriage passed this day we was discussing the minister, and Sam'l Dickie wasna sure but what Mr. Dishart wore his hat rather far back on his head. You should have seen Rob. 'My certie,' he roars, 'there's the shine frae Heaven on that little minister's face, and them as says there's no has me to fecht.'"

"Ay, weel," said the U. P., rising, "we'll see how Rob wears—and how your minister wears, too. I wouldna like to sit in a kirk whaur they daurna sing a paraphrase."

"The Psalms of David," retorted Whamond, "mount straight to heaven, but your paraphrases sticks to the ceiling o' the kirk."

"You're a bigoted set, Tammas Whamond, but I tell you this, and it's my last words to you the nicht, the day'll come when you'll hae Mr. Duthie, ay, and even the U. P. minister, preaching in the Auld Licht kirk."

"And let this be my last words to you," replied the precentor, furiously; "that rather than see a U. P. preaching in the Auld Licht kirk I would burn in hell fire for ever!"

This gossip increased Gavin's knowledge of the grim men with whom he had now to deal. But as he sat beside Margaret after she had gone to bed, their talk was pleasant.

"You remember, mother," Gavin said, "how I almost

prayed for the manse that was to give you an egg ever
morning. I have been telling Jean never to forget the egg.
"Ah, Gavin, things have come about so much as we wante
that I'm a kind o' troubled. It's hardly natural, and I hop
nothing terrible is to happen now."

Gavin arranged her pillows as she liked them, and when h
next stole into the room in his stocking soles to look at her
he thought she was asleep. But she was not. I dare sa
she saw at that moment Gavin in his first frock, and Gavi
in knickerbockers, and Gavin as he used to walk into th
Glasgow room from college, all still as real to her as th
Gavin who had a kirk.

The little minister took away the lamp to his own room
shaking his fist at himself for allowing his mother's door t
creak. He pulled up his blind. The town lay as still a
salt. But a steady light showed in the south, and on pres
ing his face against the window he saw another in the wes
Mr. Carfrae's words about the night-watch came back to hir
Perhaps it had been on such a silent night as this that th
soldiers marched into Thrums. Would they come again?

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST COMING OF THE EGYPTIAN WOMAN.

A LEARNED man says in a book, otherwise beautiful wi
truth, that villages are family groups. To him Thrums wou
only be a village, though town is the word we have ev
used, and this is not true of it.

In eight days Gavin's figure was more familiar in Thru
than many that had grown bent in it. He had alrea
been twice to the cemetery, for a minister only reaches
new charge in time to attend a funeral. Though short
stature he cast a great shadow. He was so full of
duties, Jean said, that though he pulled to the door as
left the manse, he had passed the currant-bushes before
snecked. He darted through courts, and invented w
into awkward houses. If you did not look up quickly
was round the corner. His visiting exhausted him o
less than his zeal in the pulpit, from which, according
report, he staggered damp with perspiration to the ves
where Hendry Munn wrung him like a wet cloth. A d

lady, celebrated for giving out her washing, compelled him to hold her trumpet until she had peered into all his crannies, with the Shorter Catechism for a lantern. Janet Dundas told him, in answer to his knock, that she could not abide him, but she changed her mind when he said her garden was quite a show. The wives who expected a visit scrubbed their floors for him, cleaned out their presses for him, put diamond socks on their bairns for him, rubbed their hearthstones blue for him, and even tidied up the garret for him, and triumphed over the neighbours whose houses he passed by. For Gavin blundered occasionally by inadvertence, as when he gave dear old Betty Davie occasion to say bitterly:

"Ou ay, you can sail by my door and gang to Easie's, but I'm thinking you would stop at mine, too, if I had a brass handle on't."

So passed the first four weeks, and then came the fateful night of the seventeenth of October, and with it the strange woman. Family worship at the manse was over and Gavin was talking to his mother, who never crossed the threshold save to go to church (though her activity at home was among the marvels, Jean sometimes slipped down to the Tenements to announce) when Wearyworld the policeman came to the door "with Rob Dow's compliments, and if you're no wi' me by ten o'clock I'm to break out again." Gavin knew what this meant, and at once set off for Rob's.

"You'll let me gang a bit wi' you," the policeman entreated, "for till Rob sent me on this errand not a soul has spoken to me the day; ay, mony a ane hae I spoken to, but not a man, woman, nor bairn would fling me a word."

"I often meant to ask you," Gavin said as they went along the Tenements, which smelled at that hour of roasted potatoes, "why you are so unpopular."

"It's because I'm police. I'm the first ane that has ever been in Thrums, and the very folk that appointed me at a crown a week looks upon me as a disgraced man for accepting. It's Gospel that my ain wife is short wi' me when I've on my uniform, though weel she kens that I would rather hae stuck to the loom if I hadna ha'en sic a queer richt leg. Nobody feels the shame o' my position as I do mysel', but this is a town without pity."

"It should be a consolation to you that you are discharging useful duties."

"But I'm no. I'm doing harm. There's Charles Dickson says that the very sicht o' my uniform rouses his dander

so muckle that it makes him break windows, though peaceably-disposed man till I was appointed. And what the use o' their haeing a policeman when they winna com to the lock-up after I lay hands on them?"

"Do they say they won't come?"

"Say? Catch them saying onything! They just gie m a wap into the gutters. If they would speak I wouldn complain, for I'm nat'rally the sociablest man in Thrums."

"Rob, however, had spoken to you."

"Because he had need o' me. That was aye Rob's wa converted or no converted. When he was blind drunk h would order me to see him safe hame, but would he crac wi' me? Na, na."

Wearyworld, who was so called because of his forlorn way of muttering, "It's a weary warld, and nobody bide in't," as he went his melancholy rounds, sighed like on about to cry, and Gavin changed the subject.

"Is the watch for the soldiers still kept up?" he asked.

"It is, but the watchers winna let me in aside them I'll let you see that for yoursel' at the head o' the Roods for they watch there in the auld windmill."

Most of the Thrums lights were already out, and that in the windmill disappeared as footsteps were heard.

"You're desperate characters," the policeman cried, but got no answer. He changed his tactics.

"A fine nicht for the time o' year," he cried. No answer.

"But I wouldna wonder," he shouted, "though we had rain afore morning." No answer.

"Surely you could gie me a word frae ahint the door. You're doing an onlawful thing, but I dinna ken wha you are."

"You'll swear to that?" some one asked gruffly.

"I swear to it, Peter."

Wearyworld tried another six remarks in vain.

"Ay," he said to the minister, "that's what it is to be an onpopular man. And now I'll hae to turn back, for the very anes that winna let me join them would be the first to complain if I gaed out o' bounds."

Gavin found Dow at New Zealand, a hamlet of mud houses, whose tenants could be seen on any Sabbath morning washing themselves in the burn that trickled hard by. Rob's son, Micah, was asleep at the door, but he brightened when he saw who was shaking him.

"My father put me out," he explained, "because he's

daft for the drink, and was fleid he would curse me. He hasna cursed me," Micah added, proudly, "for an aucht days come Sabbath. Hearken to him at his loom. He daurna take his feet off the treadles for fear o' running straucht to the drink."

Gavin went in. The loom, and two stools, the one four-footed and the other a buffet, were Rob's most conspicuous furniture. A shaving-strap hung on the wall. The fire was out, but the trunk of a tree, charred at one end, showed how he heated his house. He made a fire of peat, and on it placed one end of a tree trunk that might be six feet long. As the tree burned away it was pushed farther into the fireplace, and a roaring fire could always be got by kicking pieces of the smouldering wood and blowing them into flame with the bellows. When Rob saw the minister he groaned relief and left his loom. He had been weaving, his teeth clenched, his eyes on fire, for seven hours.

"I wasna fleid," little Micah said to the neighbours afterwards, "to gang in wi' the minister. He's a fine man that. He didna ca' my father names. Na, he said, 'You're a brave fellow, Rob,' and he took my father's hand, he did. My father was shaking after his fecht wi' the drink, and, says he, 'Mr. Dishart,' he says, 'if you'll let me break out nows and nans, I could bide straucht atween times, but I canna keep sober if I hinna a drink to look forrit to.' Ay, my father prigged sair to get one fou day in the month, and he said, 'Syne if I die sudden, there's thirty chances to one that I gang to heaven, so it's worth risking.' But Mr. Dishart wouldna hear o't, and he cries, 'No, by God,' he cries, 'we'll wrestle wi' the devil till we throttle him,' and down him and my father gaed on their knees.

"The minister prayed a lang time till my father said his hunger for the drink was gone, 'but,' he says, 'it swells up in me o' a sudden aye, and it may be back afore you're hame.' 'Then come to me at once,' says Mr. Dishart; but my father says, 'Na, for it would haul me into the public-house as if it had me at the end o' a rope, but I'll send the laddie.'

"You saw my father crying the minister back? It was to gie him twa pound, and, says my father, 'God helping me,' he says, 'I'll droon mysel' in the dam rather than let the drink master me, but in case it should get haud o' me and I should die drunk, it would be a michty gratification to me to ken that you had the siller to bury me re

spectable without ony help frae the poor's rates.' The minister wasna for taking it at first, but he took it when he saw how earnest my father was. Ay, he's a noble man. After he gaed awa my father made me learn the names o' the apostles frae Luke sixth, and he says to me, 'Miss out Bartholomew,' he says, 'for he did little, and put Gavin Dishart in his place.'"

Feeling as old as he sometimes tried to look, Gavin turned homeward. Margaret was already listening for him. You may be sure she knew his step. I think our steps vary as much as the human face. My bookshelves were made by a blind man who could identify by their steps nearly all who passed his window. Yet he has admitted to me that he could not tell wherein my steps differ from others; and this I believe, though rejecting his boast that he could distinguish a minister's step from a doctor's, and even tell to which denomination the minister belonged.

I have sometimes asked myself what would have been Gavin's future had he gone straight home that night from Dow's. He would doubtless have seen the Egyptian before morning broke, but she would not have come upon him like a witch. There are, I dare say, many lovers who would never have been drawn to each other had they met for the first time, as, say, they met the second time. But such dreaming is to no purpose. Gavin met Sanders Webster, the mole-catcher, and was persuaded by him to go home by Caddam Wood.

Gavin took the path to Caddam, because Sanders told him the Wild Lindsays were there, a gypsy family that threatened the farmers by day and danced devilishly, it was said, at night. The little minister knew them by repute as a race of giants, and that not many persons would have cared to face them alone at midnight; but he was feeling as one wound up to heavy duties, and meant to admonish them severely.

Sanders, an old man who lived with his sister Nanny on the edge of the wood, went with him, and for a time both were silent. But Sanders had something to say.

"Was you ever at the Spittal, Mr. Dishart?" he asked.

"Lord Rintoul's house at the top of Glen Quharity? No."

"Hae you ever looked on a lord?"

"No."

"Or on an auld lord's young leddyship? I have"

"What is she?"

"You surely ken that Rintoul's auld, and is to be married on a young leddyship. She's no' a leddyship yet, but they're to be married soon, so I may say I've seen a leddyship. Ay, an impressive sicht. It was yestreen."

"Is there a great difference in their ages?"

"As muckle as atween auld Peter Spens and his wife, wha was saxteen when he was saxty, and she was playing at dumps in the street when her man was waiting for her to make his porridge. Ay, sic a differ doesna suit wi' common folk, but of course earls can please themsels. Rintoul's so fond o' the leddyship 'at is to be, that when she was at the school in Edinbury he wrote to her ilka day. Kaytherine Crummie telled me that, and she says aince you're used to it, writing letters is as easy as skinning moles. I dinna ken what they can write sic a heap about, but I daur say he gies her his views on the Chartist agitation and the potato disease, and she'll write back about the romantic sichts o' Edinbury and the sermons o' the grand preachers she hears. Sal, though, thae grand folk has no religion to speak o', for they're a' English kirk. You're no' speiring what her leddyship said to me?"

"What did she say?"

"Weel, you see, there was a dancing ball on, and Kaytherine Crummie took me to a window whaur I could stand on a flower-pot and watch the critturs whirling round in the ball like teetotums. What's mair, she pointed out the leddyship that's to be to me, and I just glowered at her, for thinks I, 'Take your fill, Sanders, and whaur there's lords and leddyships, dinna waste a minute on colonels and honourable misses and sic like dirt.' Ay, but what wi' my een blinking at the blaze o' candles, I lost sicht o' her till all at aince somebody says at my lug, 'Well, my man, and who is the prettiest lady in the room?' Mr. Dishart, it was her leddyship. She looked like a star."

"And what did you do?"

"The first thing I did was to fall aff the flower-pot; but syne I came to, and says I, wi' a polite smirk, 'I'm thinking, your leddyship,' says I, 'as you're the bonniest yourself.'"

"I see you are a cute man, Sanders."

"Ay, but that's no' a'. She lauched in a pleased way and tapped me wi' her fan, and says she, 'Why do you think me the prettiest?' I dinna deny but what that staggered me, but I thocht a minute, and took a look at the other dancers

again, and syne I says, michty sly like, 'The other leddies
k says, 'has sic sma' feet.'"

Sanders stopped here and looked doubtingly at Gavin.

"I canna make up my mind," he said, "whether she like
that, for she rapped my knuckles wi' her fan fell sair, an
aff she gaed. Ay, I consulted Tammas Haggart about i
and he says, 'The flirty crittur,' he says. What would yo
say, Mr. Dishart?"

Gavin managed to escape without giving an answer, fo
here their roads separated. He did not find the Wild Linc
says, however. Children of whim, of prodigious strengt
while in the open, but destined to wither quickly in the hc
air of towns, they had gone from Caddam, leaving nothin
of themselves behind but a black mark burned by thei
fires into the ground. Thus they branded the earth throug
many counties until some hour when the spirit of wanderin
again fell on them, and they forsook their hearths with a
little compunction as the bird leaves its nest.

Gavin had walked quickly, and he now stood silently i
the wood, his hat in his hand. In the moonlight the gras
seemed tipped with hoar frost. Most of the beeches wer
already bare, but the shoots, clustering round them, lik
children at their mother's skirts, still retained their leave
red and brown. Among the pines these leaves were a
incongruous as a wedding-dress at a funeral. Gavin wa
standing on grass, but there were patches of heather withi
sight, and broom, and the leaf of the blaeberry. Wher
the beeches had drawn up the earth with them as they grew
their roots ran this way and that, slippery to the feet an
looking like disinterred bones. A squirrel appeared suddenl
on the charred ground, looked doubtfully at Gavin to se
if he was growing there, and then glided up a tree, wher
it sat eyeing him, and forgetting to conceal its shadow
Caddam was very still. At long intervals came from fa
away the whack of an axe on wood. Gavin was in
world by himself, and this might be some one breakin
into it.

The mystery of woods by moonlight thrilled the littl
minister. His eyes rested on the shining roots, and he re
membered what had been told him of the legend of Cadda
how once on a time it was a mighty wood, and a maide
most beautiful stood on its confines, panting and afraid, fo
a wicked man pursued her; how he drew near, and sh
ran a little way into the wood, and he followed her, an

he still ran, and still he followed, until both were for ever ost, and the bones of her pursuer lie beneath a beech, but he lady may still be heard singing in the woods if the night be fine, for then she is a glad spirit, but weeping when there is wild wind, for then she is but a mortal seeking a way out of the wood.

The squirrel slid down the fir and was gone. The axe's blows ceased. Nothing that moved was in sight. The wind that has its nest in trees was circling round with many voices, that never rose above a whisper, and were often but the echo of a sigh.

Gavin was in the Caddam of past days, where the beautiful maiden wanders ever, waiting for him who is so pure that he may find her. He will wander over the tree-tops looking for her, with the moon for his lamp, and some night he will hear her singing. The little minister drew a deep breath, and his foot snapped a brittle twig. Then he remembered who and where he was, and stooped to pick up his staff. But he did not pick it up, for as his fingers were closing on it the lady began to sing.

For perhaps a minute Gavin stood stock-still, like an intruder. Then he ran towards the singing, which seemed to come from Windyghoul, a straight road through Caddam that farmers use in summer, but leave in the back end of the year to leaves and pools. In Windyghoul there is either no wind or so much that it rushes down the sieve like an army, entering with a shriek of terror, and escaping with a derisive howl. The moon was crossing the avenue. But Gavin only saw the singer.

She was still fifty yards away, sometimes singing gleefully, and again letting her body sway lightly as she came dancing up Windyghoul. Soon she was within a few feet of the little minister, to whom singing, except when out of tune, was a suspicious thing, and dancing a device of the devil. His arm went out wrathfully, and his intention was to pronounce sentence on this woman.

But she passed, unconscious of his presence, and he had not moved nor spoken. Though really of the average height, she was a little thing to the eyes of Gavin, who always felt tall and stout except when he looked down. The grace of her swaying figure was a new thing in the world to him. Only while she passed did he see her as a gleam of colour, a gypsy elf poorly clad, her bare feet flashing beneath a short green skirt, a twig of rowan berries stuck carelessly

into her black hair. Her face was pale. She had an ange loveliness. Gavin shook.

Still she danced onwards, but she was very human, when she came to muddy water she let her feet linger in and flung up her arms, dancing more wantonly than fore. A diamond on her finger shot a thread of fire o the pool. Undoubtedly she was the devil.

Gavin leaped into the avenue, and she heard him looked behind. He tried to cry "Woman!" sternly lost the word, for now she saw him, and laughed w her shoulders, and beckoned to him, so that he shook fist at her. She tripped on, but often turning her he beckoned and mocked him, and he forgot his dignity his pulpit and all other things, and ran after her. Windyghoul did he pursue her, and it was well that precentor was not there to see. She reached the mouth the avenue, and, kissing her hand to Gavin, so that the gleamed again, was gone.

The minister's one thought was to find her, but he searc in vain. She might be crossing the hill on her way Thrums, or perhaps she was still laughing at him f behind a tree. After a longer time than he was aware Gavin realised that his boots were chirping and his trou streaked with mud. Then he abandoned the search and tened homewards in a rage.

From the hill to the manse the nearest way is down fields, and the little minister descended them rapidly. Thru which is red in daylight, was gray and still as the cemet He had glimpses of several of its deserted streets. To south the watch-light showed brightly, but no other visible. So it seemed to Gavin, and then—suddenly—he the power to move. He had heard the horn. Thric sounded, and thrice it struck him to the heart. He loo again and saw a shadow stealing along the Tenements, another, then half a dozen. He remembered Mr. Carf words, "If you ever hear that horn, I implore you to ha to the square," and in another minute he had reached Tenements.

Now again he saw the gypsy. She ran past him, ha score of men, armed with staves and pikes, at her h At first he thought they were chasing her, but they following her as a leader. Her eyes sparkled as she w them to the square with her arms.

"The soldiers, the soldiers!" was the universal cry.

"Who is that woman?" demanded Gavin, catching hold of a frightened old man.

"Curse the Egyptian limmer," the man answered, "she's egging my laddie on to fecht."

"Bless her rather," the son cried, "for warning us that the sojers is coming. Put your ear to the ground, Mr. Dishart, and you'll hear the dirl o' their feet."

The young man rushed away to the square, flinging his father from him. Gavin followed. As he turned into the school wynd, the town drum began to beat, windows were thrown open, and sullen men ran out of closes where women were screaming and trying to hold them back. At the foot of the wynd Gavin passed Sanders Webster.

"Mr. Dishart," the mole-catcher cried, "hae you seen that Egyptian? May I be struck dead if it's no' her little leddyship."

But Gavin did not hear him.

CHAPTER V.

A WARLIKE CHAPTER, CULMINATING IN THE FLOUTING OF THE MINISTER BY THE WOMAN.

"MR. DISHART!"

Jean had clutched at Gavin in Bank Street. Her hair was streaming, and her wrapper but half buttoned.

"Oh, Mr. Dishart, look at the mistress! I couldna keep her in the manse."

Gavin saw his mother beside him, bareheaded, trembling.

"How could I sit still, Gavin, and the town full o' the skirls of women and bairns? Oh, Gavin, what can I do for them? They will suffer most this night."

As Gavin took her hand he knew that Margaret felt for the people more than he.

"But you must go home, mother," he said, "and leave me to do my duty. I will take you myself if you will not go with Jean. Be careful of her, Jean."

"Ay, will I," Jean answered, then burst into tears. "Mr. Dishart," she cried, "if they take my father they'd best take my mither, too."

The two women went back to the manse, where Jean re-lit the fire, having nothing else to do, and boiled the

kettle, while Margaret wandered in anguish from room room.

Men nearly naked ran past Gavin, seeking to escape fro Thrums by the fields he had descended. When he shout to them they only ran faster. A Tillyloss weaver whom tried to stop struck him savagely and sped past to the squa In Bank Street, which was full of people at one mome and empty the next, the minister stumbled over old Charl Yuill.

"Take me and welcome," Yuill cried, mistaking Gav for the enemy. He had only one arm through the sleeve his jacket, and his feet were bare.

"I am Mr. Dishart. Are the soldiers already in the squa Yuill?"

"They'll be there in a minute."

The man was so weak that Gavin had to hold him.

"Be a man, Charles. You have nothing to fear. It not such as you the soldiers have come for. If need I I can swear that you had not the strength, even if you h the will, to join in the weavers' riot."

"For Godsake, Mr. Dishart," Yuill cried, his har chattering on Gavin's coat, "dinna swear that. My lad was in the thick o' the riot; and if he's ta'en there's t poor's-house gaping for Kitty and me, for I couldna wea half a web a week. If there's a warrant agin onybody the name of Yuill, swear it's me; swear I'm a desper character, swear I'm michty strong for all I look palsi and if when they take me, my courage breaks down, sw the mair, swear I confessed my guilt to you on the Book."

As Yuill spoke the quick rub-a-dub of a drum was hea

"The soldiers!" Gavin let go his hold of the old m who hastened away to give himself up.

"That's no the sojers," said a woman; "it's the folk gath ing in the square. This'll be a watery Sabbath in Thrum

"Rob Dow," shouted Gavin, as Dow flung past with scythe in his hand, "lay down that scythe."

"To hell wi' religion!" Rob retorted, fiercely; "it spoil thing."

"Lay down that scythe; I command you."

Rob stopped undecidedly, then cast the scythe from h but its rattle on the stones was more than he could bea

"I winna," he cried, and, picking it up, ran to the squ

An upper window in Bank Street opened, and Do McQueen put out his head. He was smoking as usual.

"Mr. Dishart," he said, "you will return home at once if you are a wise man; or, better still, come in here. You can do nothing with these people to-night."

"I can stop their fighting."

"You will only make black blood between them and you."

"Dinna heed him, Mr. Dishart," cried some women.

"You had better heed him," cried a man.

"I will not desert my people," Gavin said.

"Listen, then, to my prescription," the doctor replied. "Drive that gypsy lassie out of the town before the soldiers reach it. She is firing the men to a red heat through sheer devilry."

"She brocht the news, or we would have been nipped in our beds," some people cried.

"Does any one know who she is?" Gavin demanded, but all shook their heads. The Egyptian, as they called her, had never been seen in these parts before.

"Has any other person seen the soldiers?" he asked. "Perhaps this is a false alarm."

"Several have seen them within the last few minutes," the doctor answered. "They came from Tilliedrum, and were advancing on us from the south, but when they heard that we had got the alarm they stopped at the top of the brae, near T'nowhead's farm. Man, you would take these things more coolly if you smoked."

"Show me this woman," Gavin said, sternly, to those who had been listening. Then a stream of people carried him into the square.

To Gavin, who never before had seen a score of people in the square at once, here was a sight strange and terrible. Andrew Struthers, an old soldier, stood on the outside stair of the town-house, shouting words of command to some fifty weavers, many of them scantily clad, but all armed with pikes and poles. Most were known to the little minister, but they wore faces that were new to him. Newcomers joined the body every moment. If the drill was clumsy the men were fierce. Hundreds of people gathered round, some screaming, some shaking their fists at the old soldier, many trying to pluck their relatives out of danger. Gavin could not see the Egyptian. Women and old men, fighting for the possession of his ear, implored him to disperse the armed band. He ran up the town-house stair, and in a moment it had become a pulpit.

"Dinna dare to interfere, Mr. Dishart," Struthers said savagely.

"Andrew Struthers," said Gavin, solemnly, "in the name of God I order you to leave me alone. If you don't," he added, ferociously, "I'll fling you over the stair."

"Dinna heed him, Andrew," some one shouted, and another cried, "He canna understand our sufferings; he had dinner ilka day."

Struthers faltered, however, and Gavin cast his eye over the armed men.

"Rob Dow," he said, "William Carmichael, Thomas Whamond, William Munn, Alexander Hobart, Henders Haggart, step forward."

These were Auld Lichts, and when they found that the minister would not take his eyes off them, they obeyed, and save Rob Dow.

"Never mind him, Rob," said the atheist, Cruickshanks, "it's better playing cards in hell than singing psalms in heaven."

"Joseph Cruickshanks," responded Gavin, grimly, "you will find no cards down there."

Then Rob also came to the foot of the stair. There was some angry muttering from the crowd, and young Charles Yuill exclaimed, "Curse you, would you lord it ower us on week-days as weel as on Sabbaths?"

"Lay down your weapons," Gavin said to the six men.

They looked at each other. Hobart slipped his pike behind his back.

"I hae no weapon," he said, slily.

"Let me hae my fling this nicht," Dow entreated, "and I'll promise to bide sober for a twelvemonth."

"Oh, Rob, Rob!" the minister said, bitterly, "are you the man I prayed with a few hours ago?"

The scythe fell from Rob's hands.

"Down wi' your pikes," he roared to his companions, "or I'll brain you wi' them."

"Ay, lay them down," the precentor whispered, "but keep your feet on them."

Then the minister, who was shaking with excitement though he did not know it, stretched forth his arms for silence, and it came so suddenly as to frighten the people in the neighbouring streets."

"If he prays we're done for," cried young Charles Yuill, but even in that hour many of the people were unbonnet

"Oh, Thou who art the Lord of Hosts," Gavin prayed, "we are in Thy hands this night. These are Thy people, and they have sinned; but Thou art a merciful God, and they were sore tried, and knew not what they did. To Thee, our God, we turn for deliverance, for without Thee we are lost."

The little minister's prayer was heard all round the square, and many weapons were dropped as an Amen to it.

"If you fight," cried Gavin, brightening as he heard the clatter of the iron on the stones, "your wives and children may be shot in the streets. These soldiers have come for a dozen of you; will you be benefited if they take away a hundred?"

"Oh, hearken to him," cried many women.

"I winna," answered a man, "for I'm ane o' the dozen. Whaur's the Egyptian?"

"Here."

Gavin saw the crowd open, and the woman of Windyghoul come out of it, and, while he should have denounced her, he only blinked, for once more her loveliness struck him full in the eyes. She was beside him on the stair before he became a minister again.

"How dare you, woman?" he cried; but she flung a rowan berry at him.

"If I were a man," she exclaimed, addressing the people, "I wouldna let myself be catched like a mouse in a trap."

"We winna," some answered.

"What kind o' women are you," cried the Egyptian, her face gleaming as she turned to her own sex, "that bid your men-folk gang to gaol when a bold front would lead them to safety? Do you want to be husbandless and hameless?"

"Disperse, I command you!" cried Gavin. "This abandoned woman is inciting you to riot."

"Dinna heed this little man," the Egyptian retorted.

It is curious to know that even at that anxious moment Gavin winced because she called him little.

"She has the face of a mischief-maker," he shouted, "and her words are evil."

"You men and women o' Thrums," she responded, "ken that I wish you weel by the service I hae done you this nicht. Wha telled you the sojers was coming?"

"It was you; it was you!"

"Ay, and mony a mile I ran to bring the news. Listen, and I'll tell you mair."

"She has a false tongue," Gavin cried; "listen not to t brazen woman."

"What I have to tell," she said, "is as true as what I telled already, and how true that is you a' ken. You' wondering how the sojers has come to a stop at the tap the brae instead o' marching on the town. Here's the reas They agreed to march straucht to the square if the alar wasna given, but if it was they were to break into sm bodies and surround the town so that you couldna get o That's what they're doing now."

At this the screams were redoubled, and many men lift the weapons they had dropped.

"Believe her not," cried Gavin. "How could a wanderi gypsy know all this?"

"Ay, how can you ken?" some demanded.

"It's enough that I do ken," the Egyptian answered. "A this mair I ken, that the captain of the soldiers is confid he'll nab every one o' you that's wanted unless you do thing."

"What is 't?"

"If you a' run different ways you're lost, but if you k thegither you'll be able to force a road into the coun whaur you can scatter. That's what he's fleid you'll d

"Then it's what we will do."

"It is what you will not do," Gavin said, passionat "The truth is not in this wicked woman."

But scarcely had he spoken when he knew that start news had reached the square. A murmur arose on the sk of the mob, and swept with the roar of the sea towa the town-house. A detachment of the soldiers were ma ing down the Roods from the north.

"There's some coming frae the east-town end," was next intelligence; "and they've gripped Sanders Webster, auld Charles Yuill has given himsel' up."

"You see, you see," the gypsy said, flashing triumph Gavin.

"Lay down your weapons," Gavin cried, but his power the people had gone.

"The Egyptian spoke true," they shouted; "dinna h the minister."

Gavin tried to seize the gypsy by the shoulders, she slipped past him down the stair, and crying "Fo me!" ran round the town-house and down the brae.

"Woman!" he shouted after her, but she only waved

arms scornfully. The people followed her, many of the men still grasping their weapons, but all in disorder. Within a minute after Gavin saw the gleam of the ring on her finger, as she waved her hands, he and Dow were alone in the square.

"She's an awfu' woman that," Rob said. "I saw her lauching."

Gavin ground his teeth.

"Rob Dow," he said, slowly, "if I had not found Christ I would have throttled that woman. You saw how she flouted me?"

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH THE SOLDIERS MEET THE AMAZONS OF THRUMS.

Dow looked shamefacedly at the minister, and then set off up the square.

"Where are you going, Rob?"

"To gie myself up. I maun do something to let you see there's one man in Thrums that has mair faith in you than in a fliskmahoy."

"And only one, Rob. But I don't know that they want to arrest you."

"Ay, I had a hand in tying the polissman to the—"

"I want to hear nothing about that," Gavin said, quickly. "Will I hide, then?"

"I dare not advise you to do that. It would be wrong."

Half a score of fugitives tore past the town-house, and were out of sight without a cry. There was a tread of heavier feet, and a dozen soldiers, with several policemen and two prisoners, appeared suddenly on the north side of the square.

"Rob," cried the minister in desperation, "run!"

When the soldiers reached the town-house, where they locked up their prisoners, Dow was skulking eastward, and Gavin running down the brae.

"They're fechting," he was told, "they're fechting on the brae, the sojers is firing, a man's killed!"

But this was an exaggeration.

The brae, though short, is very steep. There is a hedge on one side of it, from which the land falls away, and on the other side a hillock. Gavin reached the scene to

see the soldiers marching down the brae, guarding a sma body of policemen. The armed weavers were retreatin before them. A hundred women or more were on th hillock, shrieking and gesticulating. Gavin joined ther calling on them not to fling the stones they had begun t gather.

The armed men broke into a rabble, flung down thei weapons, and fled back towards the town-house. Here the almost ran against the soldiers in the square, who agai forced them into the brae. Finding themselves about to l wedged between the two forces, some crawled through th hedge, where they were instantly seized by policemen. Othe sought to climb up the hillock and then escape into th country. The policemen clambered after them. The me were too frightened to fight, but a woman seized a polic man by the waist and flung him head foremost among t soldiers. One of these shouted "Fire!" but the capta cried "No." Then came showers of missiles from the wome They stood their ground and defended the retreat of t scared men.

Who flung the first stone is not known, but it is believ to have been the Egyptian. The policemen were recalle and the whole body ordered to advance down the bra Thus the weavers who had not escaped at once were driv before them, and soon hemmed in between the two bod of soldiers, when they were easily captured. But i two minutes there was a thick shower of stones and clo of earth.

It was ever afterwards painful to Gavin to recall th scene, but less on account of the shower of stones th because of the flight of one divit in it. He had been wat ing the handsome young captain, Halliwell, riding with men; admiring him, too, for his coolness. This cooln exasperated the gypsy, who twice flung at Halliwell a missed him. He rode on, smiling contemptuously.

"Oh, if I could only fling straight!" the Egyptian moan Then she saw the minister by her side, and in the t of a clock something happened that can never be explain For the moment Gavin was so lost in misery over the pr able effect of the night's rioting that he had forgotten wh he was. Suddenly the Egyptian's beautiful face was cl to his, and she pressed a divit into his hand, at the sa time pointing at the officer, and whispering "Hit him."

Gavin flung the clod of earth, and hit Halliwell on the h

I say I cannot explain this. I tell what happened, and add with thankfulness that only the Egyptian witnessed the deed. Gavin, I suppose, had flung the divit before he could stay his hand. Then he shrank in horror.

"Woman!" he cried again.

"You are a dear," she said, and vanished.

By the time Gavin was breathing freely again the lock-up was crammed with prisoners, and the Riot Act had been read from the town-house stair. It is still remembered that the baron-bailie, to whom this duty fell, had got no further than "Victoria, by the Grace of God," when the paper was struck out of his hands.

While Gavin was with the families whose breadwinners were now in the lock-up, a cell that was usually crammed on fair nights and empty for the rest of the year, the sheriff and Halliwell were in the round-room of the town-house, not in a good temper. They spoke loudly, and some of their words sank into the cell below.

"The whole thing has been a fiasco," the sheriff was heard saying, "owing to our failing to take them by surprise. Why, three-fourths of those taken will have to be liberated, and we have let the worst offenders slip through our hands."

"Well," answered Halliwell, who was wearing a heavy cloak, "I have brought your policemen into the place, and that is all I undertook to do."

"You brought them, but at the expense of alarming the country-side. I wish we had come without you."

"Nonsense! My men advanced like ghosts. Could your police have come down that brae alone to-night?"

"Yes, because it would have been deserted. Your soldiers, I tell you, have done the mischief. This woman, who, so many of our prisoners admit, brought the news of our coming, must either have got it from one of your men or have seen them on the march."

"The men did not know their destination. True, she might have seen us despite our precautions, but you forget that she told them how we were to act in the event of our being seen. That is what perplexes me."

"Yes, and me too, for it was a close secret between you and me and Lord Rintoul and not half a dozen others."

"Well, find the woman, and we shall get the explanation. If she is still in the town she cannot escape, for my men are everywhere."

"She was seen ten minutes ago."

"Then she is ours. I say, Riach, if I were you I woul set all my prisoners free and take away a cartload o their wives instead. I have only seen the backs of th men of Thrums, but, on my word, I very nearly ran awa from the women. Hallo! I believe one of your police ha caught our virago single-handed."

So Halliwell exclaimed, hearing some one shout, "Th is the rascal!" But it was not the Egyptian who was the thrust into the round-room. It was John Dunwoodie, look ing very sly. Probably there was not, even in Thrums, cannier man than Dunwoodie. His religious views wer those of Cruickshanks, but he went regularly to church "o the off-chance of their being a God after all; so I'm saf whatever side may be wrong."

"This is the man," explained a policeman, "who broug the alarm. He admits himself having been in Tilliedru just before we started."

"Your name, my man?" the sheriff demanded.

"It micht be John Dunwoodie," the tinsmith answere cautiously.

"But is it?"

"I dinna say it's no."

"You were in Tilliedrum this evening?"

"I micht hae been."

"Were you?"

"I'll swear to nothing."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm a canny man."

"Into the cell with him," Halliwell cried, losing patienc

"Leave him to me," said the sheriff. "I understand t sort of man. Now, Dunwoodie, what were you doing Tilliedrum?"

"I was taking my laddie down to be prenticed to a writ there," answered Dunwoodie, falling into the sheriff's n

"What are you yourself?"

"I micht be a tinsmith to trade."

"And you, a mere tinsmith, dare to tell me that a lawy was willing to take your son into his office? Be cautio Dunwoodie."

"Weel, then, the laddie's highly edicated and I hae sill and that's how the writer was to take him and make gentleman o' him."

"I learn from the neighbours," the policeman explain

that this is partly true, but what makes us suspect him is this: He left the laddie at Tilliedrum, and yet when he came home the first person he sees at the fireside is the laddie himself. The laddie had run home, and the reason plainly was that he had heard of our preparations and wanted to alarm the town."

"There seems something in this, Dunwoodie," the sheriff said, "and if you cannot explain it I must keep you in custody."

"I'll make a clean breast o't," Dunwoodie replied, seeing that in this matter truth was best. "The laddie was terrible against being made a gentleman, and when he saw the kind o' life he would hae to lead, clean hands, clean hickies, and no gutters on his breeks, his heart took mair scunner at genteelity than ever, and he ran hame. Ay I was mad when I saw him at the fireside, but he says to me, 'How would you like to be a gentleman yoursel', father?' he says, and that so affected me 'at I'm to gie him his ain way."

Another prisoner, Dave Langlands, was confronted with Dunwoodie.

"John Dunwoodie's as innocent as I am mysel'," Dave said, "and I'm most michty innocent. It wasna John but the Egyptian that gave the alarm. I tell you what, sheriff, if it'll make me innocenter-like I'll picture the Egyptian to you just as I saw her, and syne you'll be able to catch her easier."

"You are an honest fellow," said the sheriff.

"I only wish I had the whipping of him," growled Halliwell, who was of a generous nature.

"For what business had she," continued Dave, righteously, "to meddle in other folks' business? She's no a Thrums lassie, and so I say, 'Let the law take its course on her.'"

"Will you listen to such a cur, Riach?" asked Halliwell.

"Certainly. Speak out, Langlands."

"Weel, then, I was in the windmill the nicht."

"You were a watcher?"

"I happened to be in the windmill wi' another man," Dave went on, avoiding the officer's question.

"What was his name?" demanded Halliwell.

"It was the Egyptian I was to tell you about," Dave said, looking to the sheriff.

"Ah, yes, you only tell tales about women," said Halliwell.

"Strange women," corrected Dave. "Weel, we was there,

and it would maybe be twal o'clock, and we was spea
(but about lawful things) when we heard some ane run
yont the road. I keeked through a hole in the door,
I saw it was an Egyptian lassie 'at I had never cla
een on afore. She saw the licht in the window, and
cried, 'Hie, you billies in the windmill, the sojers is comi
I fell in a fricht, but the other man opened the door,
again she cries, 'The sojers is coming; quick, or you'
ta'en.' At that the other man up wi' his bonnet and
but I didna make off so smart."

"You had to pick yourself up first," suggested the of

"Sal, it was the lassie picked me up; ay, and she pi
up a horn at the same time."

"'Blaw on that,' she cried, 'and alarm the town.'
sheriff, I didna do't. Na, I had ower muckle respect
the law."

"In other words," said Halliwell, "you also bolted,
left the gypsy to blow the horn herself."

"I dinna deny but what I made my feet my friend,
it wasna her that blew the horn. I ken that, for I lo
back and saw her trying to do't, but she couldna, she d
ken the way."

"Then who did blow it?"

"The first man she met, I suppose. We a' kent that
horn was to be the signal except Wearywarld. He's p
so we kept it frae him."

"That is all you saw of the woman?"

"Ay, for I ran straucht to my garret, and there
men took me. Can I gae hame now, sheriff?"

"No, you cannot. Describe the woman's appearanc

"She had a heap o' rowan berries stuck in her hair,
I think, she had on a green wrapper and a red shawl.
had a most extraordinary face. I canna exact descrit
for she would be lauchin' one second and syne solem
next. I tell you her face changed as quick as you
turn the pages o' a book. Ay, here comes Wearywar
speak up for me."

Wearyworld entered cheerfully.

"This is the local policeman," a Tilliedrum officer
"we have been searching for him everywhere, and
found him now."

"Where have you been?" asked the sheriff, wrathfu

"Whaur maist honest men is at this hour," replied W
world: "in my bed."

"How dared you ignore your duty at such a time?"

"It's a long story," the policeman answered, pleasantly, in anticipation of a talk at last.

"Answer me in a word."

"In a word!" cried the policeman, quite crestfallen. "It canna be done. You'll need to cross-examine me, too. It's my lawful richt."

"I'll take you to the Tilliedrum gaol for your share in this night's work if you do not speak to the purpose. Why did you not hasten to our assistance?"

"As sure as death I never kent you was here. I was up the Roods on my rounds when I heard an awfu' din down in the square, and thinks I, there's rough characters about, and the place for honest folk is their bed. So to my bed I gaed, and I was in't when your men gripped me."

"We must see into this before we leave. In the meantime you will act as a guide to my searchers. Stop! Do you know anything of this Egyptian?"

"What Egyptian? Is't a lassie wi' rowans in her hair?"

"The same. Have you seen her?"

"That I have. There's nothing agin her, is there? Whatever it is, I'll uphaud she didna do't, for a simpler, franker-spoken crittur couldna be."

"Never mind what I want her for. When did you see her?"

"It would be about twal o'clock," began Wearyworld, unctuously, "when I was in the Roods, ay, no lang afore I heard the disturbance in the square. I was standing in the middle o' the road, wondering how the door o' the windmill was swinging open, when she came up to me.

"'A fine nicht for the time o' year,' I says to her, for nobody but the minister had spoken to me a' day.

"'A very fine nicht,' says she, very frank, though she was breathing quick like as if she had been running. 'You'll be police?' says she.

"'I am,' says I, 'and wha be you?'

"'I'm just a puir gypsy lassie,' she says.

"'And what's that in your hand?' says I.

"'It's a horn I found in the wood,' says she, 'but it's rusty and winna blaw.'

"I laughed at her ignorance, and says I, 'I warrant I could blaw it.'

"'I dinna believe you,' says she.

"'Gie me haud o't,' says I, and she gae it to me, and

I blew some bonny blasts on't. Ay, you see she didna k the way o't. 'Thank you kindly,' says she, and she awa without even minding to take the horn back again."

"You incredible idiot!" cried the sheriff. "Then it w you who gave the alarm?"

"What hae I done to madden you?" honest Wearywo asked, in perplexity.

"Get out of my sight, sir!" roared the sheriff.

But the captain laughed.

"I like your doughty policeman, Riach," he said. "H obliging friend, let us hear how this gypsy struck y How was she dressed?"

"She was snod, but no unca snod," replied Wearywo stiffly.

"I don't understand you."

"I mean she was couthie, but no sair in order."

"What on earth is that?"

"Weel, a tasty stocky, but gey orra put on."

"What language are you speaking, you enigma?"

"I'm saying she was naturally a bonny bit kimmer rat than happit up to the nines."

"Oh, go away," cried Halliwell; whereupon Wearywo descended the stair haughtily, declaring that the sheriff an unreasonable man, and that he was a queer capt who did not understand the English language.

"Can I gae hame now, sheriff?" asked Langlands, hc fully.

"Take this fellow back to his cell," Riach directed shor "and whatever else you do, see that you capture this wom Halliwell, I am going out to look for her myself. C found it, what are you laughing at?"

"At the way this vixen has slipped through your finge

"Not quite that, sir, not quite that. She is in Thru still, and I swear I'll have her before day breaks. See it, Halliwell, that if she is brought here in my abse she does not slip through your fingers."

"If she is brought here," said Halliwell, mocking H "you must return and protect me. It would be cruelty leave a poor soldier in the hands of a woman of Thrum

"She is not a Thrums woman. You have been told a dozen times."

"Then I am not afraid."

In the round-room (which is oblong), there is a th on which the bailie sits when he dispenses justice.

swathed in red cloths that give it the appearance of a pulpit. Left to himself, Halliwell flung off his cloak, and taking a chair near this dais rested his legs on the bare wooden table, one on each side of the lamp. He was still in this position when the door opened, and two policemen thrust the Egyptian into the room.

CHAPTER VII.

HAS THE FOLLY OF LOOKING INTO A WOMAN'S EYES BY WAY OF TEXT.

"THIS is the woman, captain," one of the policemen said, in triumph; "and, begging your pardon, will you keep a grip of her till the sheriff comes back?"

Halliwell did not turn his head.

"You can leave her here," he said, carelessly. "Three of us are not needed to guard a woman."

"But she's a slippery customer."

"You can go," said Halliwell; and the policemen withdrew slowly, eyeing their prisoner doubtfully until the door closed. Then the officer wheeled round languidly, expecting to find the Egyptian gaunt and muscular.

"Now then," he drawled, "why—By Jove!"

The gallant soldier was as much taken aback as if he had turned to find a pistol at his ear. He took his feet off the table. Yet he only saw the gypsy's girlish figure in its red and green, for she had covered her face with her hands. She was looking at him intently between her fingers, but he did not know this. All he did want to know just then was what was behind the hands.

Before he spoke again she had perhaps made up her mind about him, for she began to sob bitterly. At the same time she slipped a finger over her ring.

"Why don't you look at me?" asked Halliwell, selfishly.

"I daurna."

"Am I so fearsome?"

"You're a sojer, and you would shoot me like a craw."

Halliwell laughed, and, taking her wrists in his hands, uncovered her face.

"Oh, by Jove!" he said again, but this time to himself.

As for the Egyptian, she slid the ring into her pocket and fell back before the officer's magnificence.

"Oh," she cried, "is all sojers like you?"

There was such admiration in her eyes that it would have been self-contempt to doubt her. Yet having smiled complacently, Halliwell became uneasy.

"Who on earth are you?" he asked, finding it wise not to look her in the face. "Why do you not answer me more quickly?"

"Dinna be angry at that, captain," the Egyptian implored. "I promised my mither aye to count twenty afore I spoke because she thocht I was ower glib. Captain, how is't that you're so fleid to look at me?"

Thus put on his mettle, Halliwell again faced her, with the result that his question changed to "Where did you get those eyes?" Then was he indignant with himself.

"What I want to know," he explained, severely, "is how you were able to acquaint the Thrums people with our movements? That you must tell me at once, for the sheriff blames my soldiers. Come now, no counting twenty!"

He was pacing the room now, and she had her face to herself. It said several things, among them that the officer evidently did not like this charge against his men.

"Does the shirra blame the sojers?" exclaimed this quick-witted Egyptian. "Weel, that cows, for he has nane to blame but himsel'."

"What!" cried Halliwell, delighted. "It was the sheriff who told tales? Answer me. You are counting a hundred this time."

Perhaps the gypsy had two reasons for withholding her answer. If so, one of them was that, as the sheriff had told nothing, she had a story to make up. The other was that she wanted to strike a bargain with the officer.

"If I tell you," she said, eagerly, "will you set me free?"

"I may ask the sheriff to do so."

"But he mauna see me," the Egyptian said, in distress. "There's reasons, captain."

"Why, surely you have not been before him on other occasions," said Halliwell, surprised.

"No in the way you mean," muttered the gypsy, and for the moment her eyes twinkled. But the light in them went out when she remembered that the sheriff was near, and she looked desperately at the window as if ready to fling herself from it. She had very good reasons for not wish-

ing to be seen by Riach, though fear that he would put her in gaol was not one of them.

Halliwell thought it was the one cause of her woe, and great was his desire to turn the tables on the sheriff.

"Tell me the truth," he said, "and I promise to befriend you."

"Weel, then," the gypsy said, hoping still to soften his heart, and making up her story as she told it, "yestreen I met the shirra, and he telled me a' I hae telled the Thrums folk this nicht."

"You can scarcely expect me to believe that. Where did you meet him?"

"In Glen Quharity. He was riding on a horse."

"Well, I allow he was there yesterday, and on horseback. He was on his way back to Tilliedrum from Lord Rintoul's place. But don't tell me that he took a gypsy girl into his confidence."

"Ay, he did, without kenning. He was gieing his horse a drink when I met him, and he let me tell him his fortune. He said he would gaol me for an impostor if I didna tell him true, so I gaed about it cautiously, and after a minute or twa I telled him he was coming to Thrums the nicht to nab the rioters."

"You are trifling with me," interposed the indignant soldier. "You promised to tell me not what you said to the sheriff, but how he disclosed our movements to you."

"And that's just what I am telling you, only you hinna the rumelgumption to see it. How do you think fortunes is telled? First we get out o' the man, without his seeing what we're after, a' about himsel', and syne we repeat it to him. That's what I did wi' the shirra."

"You drew the whole thing out of him without his knowing?"

"'Deed I did, and he rode awa' saying I was a witch."

The soldier heard with the delight of a schoolboy.

"Now if the sheriff does not liberate you at my request," he said, "I will never let him hear the end of this story. He was right; you are a witch. You deceived the sheriff; yes, undoubtedly you are a witch."

He looked at her with fun in his face, but the fun disappeared, and a wondering admiration took its place.

"By Jove!" he said, "I don't wonder you bewitched the sheriff. I must take care or you will bewitch the captain, too."

At this notion he smiled, but he also ceased looking her. Suddenly the Egyptian again began to cry.

"You're angry wi' me," she sobbed. "I wish I had nev set een on you."

"Why do you wish that?" Halliwell asked.

"Fine you ken," she answered, and again covered her fa with her hands.

He looked at her undecidedly.

"I am not angry with you," he said, gently. "You a an extraordinary girl."

Had he really made a conquest of this beautiful creatur Her words said so, but had he? The captain could n make up his mind. He gnawed his moustache in doubt.

There was silence, save for the Egyptian's sobs. Ha well's heart was touched, and he drew nearer her.

"My poor girl—"

He stopped. Was she crying? Was she not laughing him rather? He became red.

The gypsy peeped at him between her fingers, and s that he was of two minds. She let her hands fall from face, and undoubtedly there were tears on her cheeks.

"If you're no angry wi' me," she said, sadly, "how you no look at me?"

"I am looking at you now."

He was very close to her, and staring into her wonde eyes. I am older than the captain, and those eyes h dazzled me.

"Captain dear."

She put her hand in his. His chest rose. He knew was seeking to beguile him, but he could not take his off hers. He was in a worse plight than a woman liste to the first whisper of love.

Now she was further from him, but the spell held. reached the door, without taking her eyes from his f For several seconds he had been as a man mesmerised.

Just in time he came to. It was when she turned f him to find the handle of the door. She was turnin when his hand fell on hers so suddenly that she screa He twisted her round.

"Sit down there," he said, hoarsely, pointing to the upon which he had flung his cloak. She dared not obey. Then he leant against the door, his back to her, just then he wanted no one to see his face. The gyp very still and a little frightened.

Halliwell opened the door presently, and called to the soldier on duty below:

"Davidson, see if you can find the sheriff. I want him. And Davidson—"

The captain paused.

"Yes," he muttered, and the old soldier marvelled at his words, "it is better. Davidson, lock this door on the outside."

Davidson did as he was ordered, and again the Egyptian was left alone with Halliwell.

"Afraid of a woman!" she said, contemptuously, though her heart sank when she heard the key turn in the lock.

"I admit it," he answered, calmly.

He walked up and down the room, and she sat silently watching him.

"That story of yours about the sheriff was not true," he said at last.

"I suspect it wasna," answered the Egyptian, coolly. "Hae you been thinking about it a' this time? Captain, I could tell you what you are thinking now. You're wishing it had been true, so that the ane o' you could not lauch at the other."

"Silence!" said the captain, and not another word would he speak until he heard the sheriff coming up the stair. The Egyptian trembled at his step, and rose in desperation.

"Why is the door locked?" cried the sheriff, shaking it.

"All right," answered Halliwell; "the key is on your side."

At that moment the Egyptian knocked the lamp off the table, and the room was at once in darkness. The officer sprang at her, and, catching her by the skirt, held on.

"Why are you in darkness?" asked the sheriff, as he entered.

"Shut the door," cried Halliwell. "Put your back to it."

"Don't tell me the woman has escaped?"

"I have her! I have her! She capsized the lamp, the little jade. Shut the door."

Still keeping firm hold of her, as he thought, the captain relit the lamp with his other hand. It showed an extraordinary scene. The door was shut, and the sheriff was guarding it. Halliwell was clutching the cloth of the bailie's seat. There was no Egyptian.

A moment passed before either man found his tongue.

"Open the door. After her!" cried Halliwell.

But the door would not open. The Egyptian had fled, and locked it behind her.

What the two men said to each other, it would not be fitting to tell. When Davidson, who had been gossiping at the corner of the town-house, released his captain and the sheriff, the gypsy had been gone for some minutes.

"But she sha'n't escape us," Riach cried, and hastened out to assist in the pursuit.

Halliwell was in such a furious temper that he called up Davidson, and admonished him for neglect of duty.

CHAPTER VIII.

THREE A. M.—MONSTROUS AUDACITY OF THE WOMAN.

Not till the stroke of three did Gavin turn homeward, with the legs of a ploughman, and eyes rebelling against overwork. Seeking to comfort his dejected people, whose courage lay spilt on the brae, he had been in as many houses as the policemen. The soldiers marching through the wynds came frequently upon him, and found it hard to believe that he was always the same one. They told afterwards that Thrums was remarkable for the ferocity of its women, and the number of its little ministers. The morning was nipping cold, and the streets were deserted, for the people had been ordered within doors. As he crossed the Roods, Gavin saw a gleam of redcoats. In the back wynd he heard a bugle blown. A stir in the Banker's close spoke of another seizure. At the top of the school wynd two policemen, of whom one was Wearyworld, stopped the minister with the flash of a lantern.

"We dauredna let you pass, sir," the Tilliedrum man said, "without a good look at you. That's the orders."

"I hereby swear," said Wearyworld, authoritatively, "that this is no the Egyptian. Signed, Peter Spens, policeman, called by the vulgar Wearyworld. Mr. Dishart, you can pass, unless you'll bide a wee and gie us your crack."

"You have not found the gypsy, then?" Gavin asked.

"No," the other policeman said, "but we ken she's within cry o' this very spot, and escape she canna."

"What mortal man can do," Wearyworld said, "we're doing; ay, and mair, but she's auld wecht, and may find

bilbie in queer places. Mr. Dishart, my official opinion is that this Egyptian is fearsomely like my snuff-spoon. I've kent me drap that spoon on the fender, and be beat to find it in an hour. And yet, a' the time I was sure it was there. This is a gey mysterious world, and women's the uncanniest things in't. It's hardly mous to think how uncanny they are."

"This one deserves to be punished," Gavin said, firmly; "she incited the people to riot."

"She did," agreed Wearyworld, who was supping ravenously on sociability; "ay, she even tried her tricks on me, so that them that kens no better thinks she fooled me. But she's cracky. To gie her her due, she's cracky, and as for her being a cuttie, you've said yoursel', Mr. Dishart, that we're all desperately wicked. But we're sair tried. Has it ever struck you that the trouts bites best on the Sabbath? God's critturs tempting decent men."

"Come alang," cried the Tilliedrum man, impatiently.

"I'm coming, but I maun give Mr. Dishart permission to pass first. Hae you heard, Mr. Dishart," Wearyworld whispered, "that the Egyptian diddled baith the captain and the shirra? It's my official opinion that she's no better than a roasted onion, the which, if you grip it firm, jumps out o' sicht, leaving its coat in your fingers. Mr. Dishart, you can pass."

The policeman turned down the school wynd, and Gavin, who had already heard exaggerated accounts of the strange woman's escape from the town-house, proceeded along the Tenements. He walked in the black shadows of the houses, though across the way there was the morning light.

In talking of the gypsy, the little minister had, as it were, put on the black cap; but now, even though he shook his head angrily with every thought of her, the scene in Windyghoul glimmered before his eyes. Sometimes when he meant to frown he only sighed, and then having sighed he shook himself. He was unpleasantly conscious of his right hand, which had flung the divit. Ah, she was shameless, and it would be a bright day for Thrums that saw the last of her. He hoped the policemen would succeed in— It was the gladsomeness of innocence that he had seen dancing in the moonlight. A mere woman could not be like that. How soft— And she had derided him; he, the Auld Licht minister of Thrums, had been flouted before his people by a hussy. She was without reverence, she

knew no difference between an Auld Licht minister, whose duty it was to speak and hers to listen, and herself. This woman deserved to be— And the look she cast behind her as she danced and sang! It was sweet, so wistful; the presence of purity had silenced him. Purity! Who had made him fling that divit? He would think no more of her. Let it suffice that he knew what she was. He would put her from his thoughts. Was it a ring on her finger?

Fifty yards in front of him Gavin saw the road end in a wall of soldiers. They were between him and the manse, and he was still in darkness. No sound reached him, save the echo of his own feet. But was it an echo? He stopped, and turned round sharply. Now he heard nothing, he saw nothing. Yet was not that a human figure standing motionless in the shadow behind?

He walked on, and again heard the sound. Again he looked behind, but this time without stopping. The figure was following him. He stopped. So did it. He turned back, but it did not move. It was the Egyptian!

Gavin knew her, despite the lane of darkness, despite the long cloak that now concealed even her feet, despite the hood over her head. She was looking quite respectable, but he knew her.

He neither advanced to her nor retreated. Could the unhappy girl not see that she was walking into the arms of the soldiers? But doubtless she had been driven from all her hiding-places. For a moment Gavin had it in his heart to warn her. But it was only for a moment. The next a sudden horror shot through him. She was stealing towards him, so softly that he had not seen her start. The woman had designs on him! Gavin turned from her. He walked so quickly that judges would have said he ran.

The soldiers, I have said, stood in the dim light. Gavin had almost reached them, when a little hand touched his arm.

"Stop," cried the sergeant, hearing some one approaching, and then Gavin stepped out of the darkness with the gypsy on his arm.

"It is you, Mr. Dishart," said the sergeant, "and your lady?"

"I—" said Gavin.

His lady pinched his arm.

"Yes," she answered, in an elegant English voice that made Gavin stare at her, "but, indeed, I am sorry I very

ured into the streets to-night. I thought I might be able o comfort some of these unhappy people, captain, but I could do little, sadly little."

"It is no scene for a lady, ma'am, but your husband has— Did you speak, Mr. Dishart?"

"Yes, I must inf—"

"My dear," said the Egyptian, "I quite agree with you, so we need not detain the captain."

"I'm only a sergeant, ma'am."

"Indeed!" said the Egyptian, raising her pretty eyebrows, "and how long are you to remain in Thrums, sergeant?"

"Only for a few hours, Mrs. Dishart. If this gypsy lassie had not given us so much trouble, we might have been gone by now."

"Ah, yes, I hope you will catch her, sergeant."

"Sergeant," said Gavin, firmly, "I must—"

"You must indeed, dear," said the Egyptian, "for you are sadly tired. Good night, sergeant."

"Your servant, Mrs. Dishart. Your servant, sir."

"But—" cried Gavin.

"Come, love," said the Egyptian, and she walked the distracted minister through the soldiers, and up the manse road.

The soldiers left behind, Gavin flung her arm from him, and, standing still, shook his fist in her face.

"You—you—woman!" he said.

This, I think, was the last time he called her a woman. But she was clapping her hands merrily.

"It was beautiful!" she exclaimed.

"It was iniquitous!" he answered. "And I a minister!"

"You can't help that," said the Egyptian, who pitied all ministers heartily.

"No," Gavin said, misunderstanding her. "I could not help it. No blame attaches to me."

"I meant that you could not help being a minister. You could have helped saving me, and I thank you so much."

"Do not dare to thank me. I forbid you to say that I saved you. I did my best to hand you over to the authorities."

"Then why did you not hand me over?"

Gavin groaned.

"All you had to say," continued the merciless Egyptian, "was, 'This is the person you are in search of.' I did not have my hand over your mouth. Why did you not say it?"

"Forbear!" said Gavin, wofully.

"It must have been," the gypsy said, "because you rea wanted to help me."

"Then it was against my better judgment," said Gavin

"I am glad of that," said the gypsy. "Mr. Dishart, I believe you like me all the time."

"Can a man like a woman against his will?" Ga blurted out.

"Of course he can," said the Egyptian, speaking as who knew. "That is the very nicest way to be liked."

Seeing how agitated Gavin was, remorse filled her, a she said, in a wheedling voice:

"It is all over, and no one will know."

Passion sat on the minister's brow, but he said nothi for the gypsy's face had changed with her voice, and audacious woman was become a child.

"I am very sorry," she said, as if he had caught stealing jam. The hood had fallen back, and she loo pleadingly at him. She had the appearance of one who entirely in his hands.

There was a torrent of words in Gavin, but only th trickled forth:

"I don't understand you."

"You are not angry any more?" pleaded the Egypt

"Angry!" he cried, with the righteous rage of one w when his leg is being sawn off, is asked gently if it hurts h

"I know you are," she sighed, and the sigh meant t men are strange.

"Have you no respect for law and order?" deman Gavin.

"Not much," she answered, honestly.

He looked down the road to where the redcoats were visible, and his face became hard. She read his thoughts

"No," she said, becoming a woman again, "it is not too late. Why don't you shout to them?"

"I do not understand you," Gavin repeated, weakly, the gypsy bent her head under this terrible charge.

"Only a few hours ago," he continued, "you were a gy girl in a fantastic dress, barefooted—"

The Egyptian's bare foot at once peeped out mischievo from beneath the cloak, then again retired into hiding.

"You spoke as broadly," complained the minister, so what taken aback by this apparition, "as any woma Thrums, and now you fling a cloak over your shoulders, immediately become a fine lady. Who are you?"

"Perhaps," answered the Egyptian, "it is the cloak that has bewitched me." She slipped out of it. "Ay, ay, ou losh!" she said, as if surprised, "it was just the cloak that did it, for now I'm a puir ignorant bit lassie again. My, certie, but claithes does make a differ to a woman!"

This was sheer levity, and Gavin walked scornfully away from it.

"Yet, if you will not tell me who you are," he said, looking over his shoulder, "tell me where you got the cloak."

"Na faags," replied the gypsy out of the cloak. "Really, Mr. Dishart, you had better not ask," she added, replacing it over her.

She followed him, meaning to gain the open by the fields to the north of the manse.

"Good-bye," she said, holding out her hand, "if you are not to give me up."

"I am not a policeman," replied Gavin, but he would not take her hand.

"Surely, we part friends, then?" said the Egyptian, sweetly.

"No," Gavin answered. "I hope never to see your face again."

"I cannot help," the Egyptian said, with dignity, "your not liking my face." Then, with less dignity, she added, "There is a splotch of mud on your own, little minister; it came off the divit you flung at the captain."

With this parting shot she tripped past him, and Gavin would not let his eyes follow her.

Margaret was at her window, looking for him, and he saw her, though she did not see him. He was stepping into the middle of the road to wave his hand to her, when some sudden weakness made him look towards the fields instead. The Egyptian saw him and nodded thanks for his interest in her, but he scowled and pretended to be studying the sky. Next moment he saw her running back to him.

"There are soldiers at the top of the field," she cried. "I cannot escape that way."

"There is no other way," Gavin answered.

"Will you not help me again?" she entreated.

She should not have said "again." Gavin shook his head, but pulled her closer to the manse dyke, for his mother was still in sight.

"Why do you do that?" the girl asked, quickly, looking round to see if she were pursued. "Oh, I see," she said, as her eyes fell on the figure at the window.

"It is my mother," Gavin said, though he need not hav explained, unless he wanted the gypsy to know that he was bachelor.

"Only your mother?"

"Only! Let me tell you she may suffer more than yo for your behaviour to-night!"

"How can she?"

"If you are caught, will it not be discovered that I helpe you to escape?"

"But you said you did not."

"Yes, I helped you," Gavin admitted. "My God! wha would my congregation say if they knew I had let you pas yourself off as—as my wife?"

He struck his brow, and the Egyptian had the propriet to blush.

"It is not the punishment from men I am afraid of," Gavin said, bitterly, "but from my conscience. No, that i not true. I do fear exposure, but for my mother's sake Look at her; she is happy, because she thinks me good an true; she has had such trials as you cannot know of, an now, when at last I seemed able to do something for her, yo destroy her happiness. You have her life in your hands."

The Egyptian turned her back upon him, and one of he feet tapped angrily on the dry ground. Then, child of im pulse as she always was, she flashed an indignant glance a him, and walked quickly down the road.

"Where are you going?" he cried.

"To give myself up. You need not be alarmed; I will clea you."

There was not a shake in her voice, and she spoke witho looking back.

"Stop!" Gavin called, but she would not, until his han touched her shoulder.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Why—" whispered Gavin, giddily, "why—why do you n hide in the manse garden? No one will look for you there.

There were genuine tears in the gypsy's eyes now.

"You are a good man," she said; "I like you."

"Don't say that," Gavin cried, in horror. "There is a sum mer-seat in the garden."

Then he hurried from her, and, without looking to see she took his advice, hastened to the manse. Once inside, h snibbed the door.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WOMAN CONSIDERED IN ABSENCE—ADVENTURES OF A MILITARY CLOAK.

About six o'clock Margaret sat up suddenly in bed, with the conviction that she had slept in. To her this was to ravel the day: a dire thing. The last time it happened Gavin, softened by her distress, had condensed morning worship into a sentence that she might make up on the clock.

Her part on waking was merely to ring her bell, and so rouse Jean, for Margaret had given Gavin a promise to breakfast in bed, and remain there till her fire was lit. Accustomed all her life, however, to early rising, her feet were usually on the floor before she remembered her vow, and then it was but a step to the window to survey the morning. To Margaret, who seldom went out, the weather was not of great moment, while it mattered much to Gavin, yet she always thought of it the first thing, and he not at all until he had to decide whether his companion should be an umbrella or a staff.

On this morning Margaret only noticed that there had been rain since Gavin came in. Forgetting that the water obscuring the outlook was on the other side of the panes, she tried to brush it away with her fist. It was of the soldiers she was thinking. They might have been awaiting her appearance at the window as their signal to depart, for hardly had she raised the blind when they began their march out of Thrums. From the manse she could not see them, but she heard them, and she saw some people at the Tenements run to their houses at sound of the drum. Other persons, less timid, followed the enemy with execrations half way to Tilliedrum. Margaret, the only person, as it happened, then awake in the manse, stood listening for some time. In the summer-seat of the garden, however, there was another listener protected from her sight by thin spars.

Margaret opened Gavin's door to stand and look, for she was fearful of awakening him after his heavy night. Even before she saw that he still slept she noticed with surprise that, for the first time since he came to Thrums, he had put on his shutters. She concluded that he had done this lest the light should rouse him. He was not sleeping pleasantly, for now he put his open hand before his face, as if to

guard himself, and again he frowned and seemed to d
back from something. He pointed his finger sternly to
north, ordering the weavers, his mother thought, to return
their homes, and then he muttered to himself so that
heard the words, "And if thy right hand offend thee cu
off, and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee
one of thy members should perish, and not that thy wh
body should be cast into hell." Then suddenly he bent
ward, his eyes open and fixed on the window. Thus he
for the space of half a minute, like one listening with pa
ful intentness. When he lay back Margaret slipped av
She knew he was living the night over again, but not of
divit his right hand had cast, nor of the woman in
garden.

Gavin was roused presently by the sound of voices f
Margaret's room, where Jean, who had now gathered m
news, was giving it to her mistress. Jean's cheerfuln
would have told him that her father was safe had he
wakened to thoughts of the Egyptian. I suppose he was
the window in an instant, unsnibbing the shutters and l
ing out as cautiously as a burglar might have looked
The Egyptian was gone from the summer-seat. He dre
great breath.

But his troubles were not over. He had just lifted
ewer of water when these words from the kitchen caps
it:

"Ay, an Egyptian. That's what the auld folk cal
gypsy. Weel, Mrs. Dishart, she led police and sojers s
dance through Thrums as would baffle description, thoug
kent the fits and fors o't as I dinna. Ay, but they grip
her in the end, and the queer thing is—"

Gavin listened to no more. He suddenly sat down.
queer thing, of course, was that she had been caught in
garden. Yes, and doubtless queerer things about this h
and her "husband" were being bawled from door to d
To the girl's probable sufferings he gave no heed. W
kind of man had he been a few hours ago to yield to
machinations of a woman who was so obviously the de
Now he saw his folly in the face.

The tray in Jean's hands clattered against the dresser.
Gavin sprang from his chair. He thought it was his el
at the front door.

In the parlour he found Margaret sorrowing for t
whose mates had been torn from them, and Jean with a

ushed by talk. On ordinary occasions the majesty of the inister still cowed Jean, so that she could only gaze at m without shaking when in church, and then because she ore a veil. In the manse he was for taking a glance at deways and then going away comforted, as a respectable oman may once or twice in a day look at her brooch in the asteboard box as a means of helping her with her work. ut with such a to-do in Thrums, and she the possessor of xclusive information, Jean's reverence for Gavin only took er to-day as far as the door, where she lingered half in the arlour and half in the lobby, her eyes turned politely from ne minister, but her ears his entirely.

"I thought I heard Jean telling you about the capture of ne—of an Egyptian woman," Gavin said to his mother, ervously.

"Did you cry to me?" Jean asked, turning round long-ngly. "But maybe the mistress will tell you about the gyptian hersel'."

"Has she been taken to Tilliedrum?" Gavin asked, in a ollow voice.

"Sup up your porridge, Gavin," Margaret said. "I'll have o speaking about this terrible night till you've eaten some-ning."

"I have no appetite," the minister replied, pushing his late from him. "Jean, answer me."

"'Deed, then," said Jean, willingly, "they hinna ta'en her o Tilliedrum."

"For what reason?" asked Gavin, his dread increasing.

"For the reason that they couldna catch her," Jean nswered. "She spirited hersel' awa', the magerful crit-ur."

"What! But I heard you say—"

"Ay, they had her ainee, but they couldna keep her. It's ke a witch story. They had her safe in the town-house, nd baith shirra and captain guarding her, and syne in a link she wasna there. A' nicht they looked for her, but he hadna left so muckle as a foot-print ahint her, and in he tail of the day they had to up wi' their tap in their ap and march awa without her."

Gavin's appetite returned.

"Has she been seen since the soldiers went away?" he sked, laying down his spoon with a new fear. "Where s she now?"

"No human eye has seen her," Jean answered, impres-

sively. "Whaur is she now? Whaur does the flies vanish in winter? We ken they're some gait, but whaur?"

"But what are the people saying about her?"

"Daft things," said Jean. "Old Charles Yuill gangs length o' hinting that she's dead and buried."

"She could not have buried herself, Jean," Margaret sa mildly.

"I dinna ken. Charles says she's even capable o' that."

Then Jean retired reluctantly (but leaving the door aja and Gavin fell to on his porridge. He was now so cheer that Margaret wondered.

"If half the stories about this gypsy be true," she sa "she must be more than a mere woman."

"Less, you mean, mother," Gavin said, with convicti "She is a woman, and a sinful one."

"Did you see her, Gavin?"

"I saw her. Mother, she flouted me!"

"The daring tawpie!" exclaimed Margaret.

"She is all that," said the minister.

"Was she dressed just like an ordinary gypsy body? you don't notice clothes much, Gavin."

"I noticed hers," Gavin said, slowly, "she was in a gr and red, I think, and barefooted."

"Ay," shouted Jean from the kitchen, startling both them; "but she had a lang gray-like cloak, too. She was jouking up closes in't."

Gavin rose, considerably annoyed, and shut the par door.

"Was she as bonny as folks say?" asked Margaret. "J says they speak of her beauty as unearthly."

"Beauty of her kind," Gavin explained learnedly, neither earthly nor heavenly." He was seeing things as are very clearly now. "What," he said, "is mere phy beauty? Pooh!"

"And yet," said Margaret, "the soul surely does s through the face to some extent."

"Do you really think so, mother?" Gavin asked, a uneasily.

"I have always noticed it," Margaret said, and the son sighed.

"But I would let no face influence me a jot," he said covering.

"Ah, Gavin, I'm thinking I'm the reason you pay s regard to women's faces. It's no natural."

"You've spoilt me, you see, mother, for ever caring for another woman. I would compare her to you, and then where would she be?"

"Sometime," Margaret said, "you'll think differently."

"Never," answered Gavin, with a violence that ended the conversation.

Soon afterwards he set off for the town, and in passing down the garden walk cast a guilty glance at the summer-seat. Something black was lying in one corner of it. He stopped irresolutely, for his mother was nodding to him from her window. Then he disappeared into the little arbour. What had caught his eye was a Bible. On the previous day, as he now remembered, he had been called away while studying in the garden, and had left his Bible on the summer-seat, a pencil between its pages. Not often probably had the Egyptian passed a night in such company.

CHAPTER X.

FIRST SERMON AGAINST WOMEN.

On the afternoon of the following Sabbath, as I have said, something strange happened in the Auld Licht pulpit. The congregation, despite their troubles, turned it over and peered at it for days, but had they seen into the inside of it, they would have weaved few webs until the session had sat on the minister. The affair baffled me at the time, and for the Egyptian's sake I would avoid mentioning it now, were it not one of Gavin's milestones. It includes the first of his memorable sermons against Woman.

I was not in the Auld Licht church that day, but I heard of the sermon before night, and this, I think, is as good an opportunity as another for showing how the gossip about Gavin reached me up here in the Glen schoolhouse. Since Margaret and her son came to the manse, I had kept the vow made to myself, and avoided Thrums. Only once had I ventured to the kirk, and then, instead of taking my old seat, the fourth from the pulpit, I sat down near the plate, where I could look at Margaret without her seeing me. To spare her that agony, I even stole away as the last word of the benediction was pronounced, and my haste scandalised

many, for, with Auld Lichts, it is not customary to reti quickly from the church after the manner of the godle U. P.'s (and the Free Kirk is little better), who have the hats in their hand when they rise for the benediction, that they may at once pour out like a burst dam. We resu our seats, look straight before us, clear our throats, a stretch out our hands for our womenfolk to put our ha into them. In time we do get out, but I am never sure ho

On the Sabbath evening after the riot, I stood at t usual place awaiting my friends, and saw, before th reached me, that they had something untoward to tell. T farmer, his wife and three children, holding each othe hands, stretched across the road. Birse was a little behir but a conversation was being kept up by shouting. All we walking the Sabbath pace, and the family having started h a minute in advance, the post had not yet made up on the

"It's sitting to snaw," Waster Lunny said, drawing nea and just as I was to reply, "It is so," Silva slipped in t words before me.

"You wasna at the kirk," was Elspeth's salutation. had been at the Glen church, but did not contradict h for it is Established, and so neither here nor there. I w anxious, too, to know what their long faces meant, a so asked at once:

"Was Mr. Dishart on the riot?"

"Forenoon, ay; afternoon, no," replied Waster Lun walking round his wife to get nearer me. "Dominie, queery thing happened in the kirk this day, sic as—"

"Waster Lunny," interrupted Elspeth, sharply; "have y on your Sabbath shoon or have you no on your Sabb shoon?"

"Guid care you took I should hae the dagont onca things on," retorted the farmer.

"Keep out o' the gutter, then," said Elspeth, "on the Lo day."

"Him," said her man, "that is forced by a foolish wom to wear genteel 'lastic-sided boots canna forget them till takes them aff. Whaur's the extra reverence in wear shoon twa sizes ower sma?"

"It mayna be mair reverent," suggested Birse, to wh Elspeth's kitchen was a pleasant place, "but it's grand, you canna expect to be baith grand and comfortable."

I reminded them that they were speaking of Mr. Di

"We was saying," began the post, briskly, "that—"

"It was me that was saying it," said Waster Lunny. "So, dominie—"

"Haud your gabs, baith o' you," interrupted Elspeth. "You've been roaring the story to ane another till you're hoarse."

"In the forenoon," Waster Lunny went on, determinedly, "Mr. Dishart preached on the riot, and fine he was. Oh, dominie, you should hae heard him ladling it on to Lang Tammas, no by name but in sic a way that there was no mistaking wha he was preaching at. Sal! oh, losh! Tammas got it strong."

"But he's dull in the uptake," broke in the post, "by what I expected. I spoke to him after the sermon, and I says, just to see if he was properly humbled, 'Ay, Tammas,' I says, them that discourse was preached against winna think themselves seven feet men for a while again.' 'Ay, Birse,' he answers, 'and glad I am to hear you admit it, for he had you in his eye.' I was fair scunnered at Tammas the day."

"Mr. Dishart was preaching at the whole clanjamfray o' you," said Elspeth.

"Maybe he was," said her husband, leering; "but you needna cast it at us, for, my certie, if the men got it frae him in the forenoon, the women got it in the afternoon."

"He redd them up most michty," said the post. "Thae was his very words or something like them. 'Adam,' says he, 'was an erring man, but aside Eve he was respectable.'"

"Ay, but it wasna a' women he meant," Elspeth explained, "for when he said that, he pointed his finger direct at T'nowhead's lassie, and I hope it'll do her good."

"But I wonder," I said, "that Mr. Dishart chose such a subject to-day. I thought he would be on the riot at both services."

"You'll wonder mair," said Elspeth, "when you hear what happened afore he began the afternoon sermon. But I canna get in a word wi' that man o' mine."

"We've been speaking about it," said Birse, "ever since we left the kirk door. Tod, we've been sawing it like seed a' alang the glen."

"And we meant to tell you about it at once," said Waster Lunny; "but there's aye so muckle to say about a minister. Dagont, to hae ane keeps a body out o' languor. Ay, but this breaks the drum. Dominie, either Mr. Dishart wasna weel, or he was in the devil's grip."

This startled me, for the farmer was looking serious.

"He was weel eneuch," said Birse, "for a heap o' fow speired at Jean if he had ta'en his porridge as usual, and sh admitted he had. But the lassie was skeered hersel', an said it was a mercy Mrs. Dishart wasna in the kirk."

"Why was she not there?" I asked, anxiously.

"Oh, he winna let her out in sic weather."

"I wish you would tell me what happened," I said to E speth.

"So I will," she answered, "if Waster Lunny would hau his wheesht for a minute. You see the afternoon diet bega in the ordinary way, and a' was richt until we came to th sermon. 'You will find my text,' he says, in his piercin voice, 'in the eighth chapter of Ezra.'"

"And at thae words," said Waster Lunny, "my heart gae loup, for Ezra is an unca ill book to find; ay, and so Ruth."

"I kent the books o' the Bible by heart," said Elspet scornfully, "when I was a sax-year-auld."

"So did I," said Waster Lunny, "and I ken them y except when I'm hurried. When Mr. Dishart gave o Ezra he a sort o' keeked round the kirk to find out if had puzzled onybody, and so there was a kind o' a compe tion among the congregation wha would lay hand on first. That was what doited me. Ay, there was Ruth wh she wasna wanted, but Ezra, dagont, it looked as if Ez had jumped clean out o' the Bible."

"You wasna the only distressed crittur," said his wi "I was ashamed to see Eppie McLaren looking up the or o' the books at the beginning o' the Bible."

"Tibbie Birse was even mair brazen," said the post, "the sly cuttie opened at Kings and pretended it w Ezra."

"None o' thae things would I do," said Waster Lun "and sal, I dauredna, for Davit Lunan was glowering o my shuther. Ay, you may scowl at me, Elspeth Proct but as far back as I can mind, Ezra has done me. M a time afore I start for the kirk I take my Bible to a q place and look Ezra up. In the very pew I says ca to mysel', 'Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job,' the which sho be a help, but the moment the minister gi'es out that aw book, away goes Ezra like the Egyptian."

"And you after her," said Elspeth, "like the weavers t wouldna fecht. You make a windmill of your Bible."

"Oh, I winna admit I'm beat. Never mind, there's q

kings in the world forby Ezra. How is cripples aye so uffed up mair than other folk? How does flour bread aye all on the buttered side?"

"I will mind," Elspeth said, "for I was terrified the minister would admonish you frae the pulpit."

"He couldna hae done that, for was he no baffled to find Ezra himsel'?"

"Him to find Ezra!" cried Elspeth. "I hae telled you a dozen times he found it as easy as you could yoke a horse."

"The thing can be explained in no other way," said her husband, doggedly, "if he was weel and in sound mind."

"Maybe the dominie can clear it up," suggested the post, him being a scholar."

"Then tell me what happened," I asked.

"Godsake, hae we no telled you?" Birse said. "I thocht ve had."

"It was a terrible scene," said Elspeth, giving her husband a shove. "As I said, Mr. Dishart gave out Ezra eighth. Veel, I turned it up in a jiffy, and syne looked cautiously to ee how Eppie McLaren was getting on. Just at that minute heard a groan frae the pulpit. It didna stop short o' a roan. Ay, you may be sure I looked quick at the minister, nd there I saw a sicht that would hae made the grandest ape. His face was as white as a baker's, and he had a sort f fallen against the back o' the pulpit, staring demented-like t his open Bible."

"And I saw him," said Birse, "put up his hand atween im and the Book, as if he thocht it was to jump at him."

"Twice," said Elspeth, "he tried to speak, and twice he et the words fall."

"That," says Waster Lunny, "the whole congregation admits, but I didna see it mysel', for a' this time you may picture me hunting savage-like for Ezra. I thocht the minister was waiting till I found it."

"Hendry Munn," said Birse, "stood upon one leg, wondering whether he should run to the session-house for a glass of water."

"But by that time," said Elspeth, "the fit had left Mr. Dishart, or rather it had ta'en a new turn. He grew red, nd it's gospel that he stamped his foot."

"He had the face of one using bad words," said the post. "He didna swear, of course, but that was the face he had on."

"I missed it," said Waster Lunny, "for I was in full
after Ezra, with the sweat running down my face."

"But the most astounding thing has yet to be telled," w
on Elspeth. "The minister shook himsel' like one waken
frae a nasty dream, and he cries in a voice of thunder,
as if he was shaking his fist at somebody—"

"He cries," Birse interposed, cleverly, "he cries, 'You
find the text in Genesis, chapter three, verse six.' "

"Yes," said Elspeth, "first he gave out one text, and t
he gave out another, being the most amazing thing to
mind that ever happened in the town of Thrums. What
our children's children think o't? I wouldna hae misse
for a pound note."

"Nor me," said Waster Lunny, "though I only got
tail o't. Dominie, no sooner had he said Genesis third
sixth, than I laid my finger on Ezra. Was it no provoki
Onybody can turn up Genesis, but it needs an able-bo
man to find Ezra."

"He preached on the Fall," Elspeth said, "for an h
and twenty-five minutes, but powerful though he wa
would rather he had telled us what made him gie the go
to Ezra."

"All I can say," said Waster Lunny, "is that I never he
him mair awe-inspiring. Whaur has he got sic a knowle
of women? He riddled them, he fair riddled them, ti
was ashamed o' being married."

"It's easy kent whaur he got his knowledge of wom
Birse explained, "it's a' in the original Hebrew. You
howk ony mortal thing out o' the original Hebrew, the w
all ministers hae at their finger ends. What else m
them ken to jump a verse now and then when giving o
psalm?"

"It wasna women like me he denounced," Elspeth insis
"but young lassies that leads men astray wi' their abomin
wheedling ways."

"Tod," said her husband, "if they try their hands on
Dishart they'll meet their match."

"They will," chuckled the post. "The Hebrew's a gr
thing, though teuch, I'm telled, michty teuch."

"His sublimest burst," Waster Lunny came back to
me, "was about the beauty o' the soul being every
and the beauty o' the face no worth a snuff. Wi
scorn he has for bonny faces and toom souls! I d
deny but what a bonny face fell takes me, but Mr.

art wouldna gie a blade o' grass for't. Ay, and I used o think that in their foolishness about women there was lagont little differ atween the unlearned and the highly dicated."

The gossip about Gavin brought hitherto to the school-ouse had been as bread to me, but this I did not like. For a minister to behave thus was as unsettling to us as a change of Government to Londoners, and I decided to give my scholars a holiday on the morrow and tramp into the town for fuller news. But all through the night it snowed, and next day, and then intermittently for many days, and every all took the school miles farther away from Thrums. Birse and the crows had now the glen road to themselves, and even Birse had twice or thrice to bed with me. At these imes, had he not been so interested in describing his progress hrough the snow, maintaining that the crying want of our glen road was palings for postmen to kick their feet against, ie must have wondered why I always turned the talk to he Auld Licht minister.

"Ony explanation o' his sudden change o' texts?" Birse aid, repeating my question. "Tod, and there is and to spare, or I hear tell there's saxteen explanations in the Tenements done. As Tammas Haggart says, that's a blessing, for if here had just been twa explanations the kirk micht hae plit on them."

"Ay," he said at another time, "twa or three even dared to uestion the minister, but I'm thinking they made nothing 't. The majority agrees that he was just inspired to change is text. But Lang Tammas is dour. Tammas telled the ession a queer thing. He says that after the diet o' worship n that eventful afternoon Mr. Dishart carried the Bible out ' the pulpit instead o' leaving that duty as usual to the irk officer. Weel, Tammas, being precentor, has a richt, s you ken, to leave the kirk by the session-house door, ust like the minister himsel'. He did so that afternoon, nd what, think you, did he see? He saw Mr. Dishart tear-ng a page out o' the Bible, and flinging it savagely into the ession-house fire. You dinna credit it? Weel, it's stag-ering, but there's Hendry Munn's evidence, too. Hendry ook his first chance o' looking up Ezra in the minister's ible, and, behold, the page wi' the eighth chapter was one. Them that thinks Tammas wasna blind wi' excitement auds it had been Ezra eighth that gaed into the fire. Ony-ay, there's no doubt about the page's being missing, for

whatever excitement Tammas was in, Hendry was as cool ever."

A week later Birse told me that the congregation h decided to regard the incident as adding lustre to their ki This was largely, I fear, because it could then be used belittle the Established minister. That fervent Auld Lic Snecky Hobart, feeling that Gavin's action was unsound, h gone on the following Sabbath to the parish kirk and under Mr. Duthie. But Mr. Duthie was a close reader, that Snecky flung himself about in his pew in misery. T minister concluded his sermon with these words: "But this subject I will say no more at present." "Because canna," Snecky roared, and strutted out of the church. Co paring the two scenes, it is obvious that the Auld Lichts l won a victory. After preaching impromptu for an h and twenty-five minutes, it could never be said of Ga that he needed to read. He became more popular than e Yet the change of texts was not forgotten. If in the fut any other indictments were brought against him, it wo certainly be pinned to them.

I marvelled long over Gavin's jump from Ezra to Gene and at this his first philippic against Woman, but I h known the cause for many a year. The Bible was the that had lain on the summer-seat while the Egyptian there. It was the great pulpit Bible which remains in church as a rule, but Gavin had taken it home the prev day to make some of its loose pages secure with paste. had studied from it on the day preceding the riot, but used a small Bible during the rest of the week. When turned in the pulpit to Ezra, where he had left the l Bible open in the summer-seat, he found this scrawled ac chapter eight:

"I will never tell who flung the clod at Captain Halliv But why did you fling it? I will never tell that you allo me to be called Mrs. Dishart before witnesses. But is this a Scotch marriage? Signed, Babbie the Egyptian."

CHAPTER XI.

TELLS IN A WHISPER OF MAN'S FALL DURING THE CURLING SEASON.

No snow could be seen in Thrums by the beginning of the year, though clods of it lay in Waster Lunny's fields, where his hens wandered all day as if looking for something they had dropped. A black frost had set in, and one walking on the glen road could imagine that through the cracks in it, he saw a loch glistening. From my door I could hear the roar of curling stones at Rashie-bog, which is almost four miles nearer Thrums. On the day I am recalling, I see that I only made one entry in my diary, "At last bought Waster Lunny's bantams." Well do I remember the transaction, and no wonder, for I had all but bought the bantams every day for a six months.

About noon the doctor's dog-cart was observed by all the Tenements standing at the Auld Licht manse. The various surmises were wrong. Margaret had not been suddenly taken ill; Jean had not swallowed a darning-needle; the minister had not walked out at his study window in a moment of sublime thought. Gavin stepped into the dog-cart, which at once drove off in the direction of Rashie-bog, but equally in error were those who said that the doctor was making a curler of him.

There was, however, ground for gossip; for Thrums folk seldom called in a doctor until it was too late to cure them, and McQueen was not the man to pay social visits. Of his skill we knew fearsome stories, as that, by looking at Archie Allardyce, who had come to broken bones on a ladder, he discovered which rung Archie fell from. When he entered a stuffy room he would poke his staff through the window to let in fresh air, and then fling down a shilling to pay for the breakage. He was deaf in the right ear, and therefore usually took the left side of prosy people, thus, as he explained, making a blessing of an affliction. "A pity I don't hear better?" I have heard him say. "Not at all. If my misfortune, as you call it, were to be removed, you can't conceive how I should miss my deaf ear." He was a fine fellow, though brusque, and I never saw him without his pipe until two days before we buried him, which was five and twenty years ago come Martinmas.

"We're all quite weel," Jean said, apprehensively, as s answered his knock on the manse door, and she tried to pleasant, too, for well she knew that, if a doctor willed she could have fever in five minutes.

"Ay, Jean, I'll soon alter that," he replied, ferocious "Is the master in?"

"He's at his sermon," Jean said, with importance.

To interrupt the minister at such a moment seemed sa rilege to her, for her up-bringing had been good. H mother had once fainted in the church, but though t family's distress was great, they neither bore her out, r signed to the kirk officer to bring water. They propped l up in the pew in a respectful attitude, joining in the singi meanwhile, and she recovered in time to look up 2d Chr icles, twenty-first and seventh.

"Tell him I want to speak to him at the door," said doctor, fiercely, "or I'll bleed you this minute."

McQueen would not enter, because his horse might h seized the opportunity to return stablewards. At the hou where it was accustomed to stop, it drew up of its o accord, knowing where the doctor's "cases" were as well himself, but it resented new patients.

"You like misery, I think, Mr. Dishart," McQueen s when Gavin came to him, "at least I am always finding in the thick of it, and that is why I am here now. I h a rare job for you if you will jump into the machine. know Nanny Webster, who lives on the edge of Win ghoul? No, you don't, for she belongs to the other k Well, at all events, you know her brother, Sanders, mole-catcher?"

"I remember him. You mean the man who boasted much about seeing a ball at Lord Rintoul's place?"

"The same, and, as you may know, his boasting a maltreating policemen whom he never saw led to his b sentenced to nine months in gaol lately."

"That is the man," said Gavin. "I never liked him."

"No, but his sister did," McQueen answered, drily, " with reason, for he was her breadwinner, and now sh starving."

"Anything I can give her—"

"Would be too little, sir."

"But the neighbours—"

"She has few near her, and though the Thrums help each other bravely, they are at present nigh

edy as herself. Nanny is coming to the poorhouse, Mr. shart."

"God help her!" exclaimed Gavin.

"Nonsense," said the doctor, trying to make himself a rd man. "She will be properly looked after there, and— d in time she will like it."

"Don't let my mother hear you speaking of taking an old oman to that place," Gavin said, looking anxiously up the air. I cannot pretend that Margaret never listened.

"You all speak as if the poorhouse was a gaol," the doctor id, testily. "But so far as Nanny is concerned, everything arranged. I promised to drive her to the poorhouse to-day, d she is waiting for me now. Don't look at me as if I as a brute. She is to take some of her things with her the poorhouse, and the rest is to be left until Sanders's eturn, when she may rejoin him. At least we said that to er to comfort her."

"You want me to go with you?"

"Yes, though I warn you it may be a distressing scene; deed, the truth is that I am loth to face Nanny alone to-day. Ir. Duthie should have accompanied me, for the Websters re Established Kirk; ay, and so he would if Rashie-bog had ot been bearing. A terrible snare this curling, Mr. Dis- art,"—here the doctor sighed,—"I have known Mr. Duthie ait until midnight struck on Sabbath and then be off to ashie-bog with a torch."

"I will go with you," Gavin said, putting on his coat.

"Jump in then. You won't smoke? I never see a respect- ble man not smoking, sir, but I feel indignant with him or such sheer waste of time."

Gavin smiled at this, and Snecky Hobart, who happened be keeking over the manse dyke, bore the news to the enements.

"I'll no sleep the nicht," Snecky said, "for wondering hat made the minister lauch. Ay, it would be no trifle." A minister, it is certain, who wore a smile on his face ould never have been called to the Auld Licht kirk, for fe is a wrestle with the devil, and only the frivolous think to arow him without taking off their coats. Yet, though avin's zeal was what the congregation reverenced, many ved him privately for his boyishness. He could unbend at arriages, of which he had six on the last day of the year, nd at every one of them he joked (the same joke) like a yman. Some did not approve of his playing at the tee-

totum for ten minutes with Kitty Dundas's invalid son, the way Kitty boasted about it would have disgusted a body. At the present day there are probably a score Gavins in Thrums, all called after the little minister, there is one Gavinia, whom he hesitated to christen. made humorous remarks (the same remark) about all th children, and his smile as he patted their heads was for thi ing over when one's work was done for the day.

The doctor's horse clattered up the Backwynd noisily, if a minister behind made no difference to it. Instead climbing the Roods, however, the nearest way to Nanny's went westward, which Gavin, in a reverie, did not not The truth must be told. The Egyptian was again in his h

"Have I fallen deaf in the left ear, too?" said the doc "I see your lips moving, but I don't catch a syllable."

Gavin started, coloured, and flung the gypsy out of trap.

"Why are we not going up the Roods?" he asked.

"Well," said the doctor, slowly, "at the top of the R there is a stance for circuses, and this old beast of m won't pass it. You know, unless you are behind in clashes and clavers of Thrums, that I bought her from manager of a travelling show. She was the horse ('Li ning' they called her) that galloped round the ring at a an hour, and so at the top of the Roods she is still manageable. She once dragged me to the scene of former triumphs, and went revolving round it, dragging machine after her."

"If you had not explained that," said Gavin, "I m have thought that you wanted to pass by Rashie-bog."

The doctor, indeed, was already standing up to cat first glimpse of the curlers.

"Well," he admitted, "I might have managed to pass circus ring, though what I have told you is true. How I have not come this way merely to see how the mat going. I want to shame Mr. Duthie for neglecting his It will help me to do mine, for the Lord knows I am ing it hard, with the music of these stones in my ears."

"I never saw it played before," Gavin said, standing his turn. "What a din they make! McQueen, I be they are fighting!"

"No, no," said the excited doctor, "they are just a bit That's the proper spirit for the game. Look, that's the ba bailie near standing on his head, and there's Mr. Dutri

s head a' thegither. Yon's twa weavers and a mason irsing the laird, an the man wi' the besom is the Master of umnathie."

"A democracy, at all events," said Gavin.

"By no means," said the doctor, "it's an aristocracy of in-llect. Gee up, Lightning, or the frost will be gone before e are there."

McQueen turned Lightning down the Rashie-bog road, hich would be impassable as soon as the thaw came. In mmer Rashie-bog is several fields in which a cart does ot sink unless it stands still, but in winter it is a loch ith here and there a spring, where dead men are said lie. There are no rushes at its east end, and here the g-cart drew up near the curlers, a crowd of men dancing, reaming, shaking their fists and sweeping, while half a undred onlookers got in their way, gesticulating and dvising.

"Hold me tight," the doctor whispered to Gavin, "or ll be leaving you to drive Nanny to the poorhouse by ourself."

He had no sooner said this, than he tried to jump out f the trap.

"You donnert fule, John Robbie," he shouted to a player, soop her up, man, soop her up; no, no, dinna, dinna; leave er alane. Bailie, leave her alane, you blazing idiot. Mr. ishart, let me go; what do you mean, sir, by hanging on my coat tails? Dang it all, Duthie's winning. He has it, e has it!"

"You're to play, doctor?" some cried, running to the dog-art. "We hae missed you sair."

"Jeames, I—I— No, I daurna."

"Then we get our licks. I never saw the minister in sic orm. We can do nothing against him."

"Then," cried McQueen, "I'll play. Come what will, ll play. Let go my tails, Mr. Dishart, or I'll cut them ff. Duty? Fiddlesticks!"

"Shame on you, sir," said Gavin; "yes, and on you others ho would entice him from his duty."

"Shame!" the doctor cried. "Look at Mr. Duthie. Is he shamed? And yet that man has been reproving me for a velvemonths, because I've refused to become one of his ders. Duthie," he shouted, "think shame of yourself for rling this day."

Mr. Duthie had carefully turned his back to the trap, for

Gavin's presence in it annoyed him. We seldom care to reminded of our duty by seeing another do it. Now, h ever, he advanced to the dog-cart, taking the far side Gavin.

"Put on your coat, Mr. Duthie," said the doctor, " come with me to Nanny Webster's. You promised."

Mr. Duthie looked quizzically at Gavin, and then at sky.

"The thaw may come at any moment," he said.

"I think the frost is to hold," said Gavin.

"It may hold over to-morrow," Mr. Duthie admitted; to-morrow's the Sabbath, and so a lost day."

"A what?" exclaimed Gavin, horrified.

"I only mean," Mr. Duthie answered, colouring, "that can't curl on the Lord's day. As for what it may be on Monday, no one can say. No, doctor, I won't ris We're in the middle of a game, man."

Gavin looked very grave.

"I see what you are thinking, Mr. Dishart," the old ister said, doggedly; "but then, you don't curl. You very wise. I have forbidden my sons to curl."

"Then you openly snap your fingers at your duty, Duthie?" said the doctor, loftily. ("You can let go tails now, Mr. Dishart, for the madness has passed.")

"None of your virtuous airs, McQueen," said Mr. Du hotly. "What was the name of the doctor that wa women never to have bairns while it was hauding?"

"And what," retorted McQueen, "was the name of minister that told his session he would neither preach pray while the black frost lasted?"

"Hoots, doctor," said Duthie, "don't lose your temper cause I'm in such form."

"Don't lose yours, Duthie, because I aye beat you."

"You beat me, McQueen! Go home, sir, and don't havers. Who beat you at—"

"Who made you sing small at—"

"Who won—"

"Who—"

"Who—"

"I'll play you on Monday for whatever you like!" sh the doctor.

"If it holds," cried the minister, "I'll be here the day. Name the stakes yourself. A stone?"

"No," the doctor said, "but I'll tell you what we'll

r. You've been dinging me doited about that eldership, d we'll play for't. If you win I accept office."

"Done," said the minister, recklessly.

The dog-cart was now turned towards Windyghoul, its iver once more good-humoured, but Gavin silent.

"You would have been the better of my deaf ear just now, r. Dishart," McQueen said after the loch had been left hind. "Ay, and I'm thinking my pipe would soothe you. ut don't take it so much to heart, man. I'll lick him sily. He's a decent man, the minister, but vain of his play, diculously vain. However, I think the sight of you, in the ace that should have been his, has broken his nerve for is day, and our side may win yet."

"I believe," Gavin said, with sudden enlightenment, "that ou brought me here for that purpose."

"Maybe," chuckled the doctor; "maybe." Then he changed ie subject suddenly. "Mr. Dishart," he asked, "were you er in love?"

"Never!" answered Gavin, violently.

"Well, well," said the doctor, "don't terrify the horse. I ave been in love myself. It's bad, but it's nothing to rling."

CHAPTER XII.

TRAGEDY OF A MUD HOUSE.

THE dog-cart bumped between the trees of Caddam, flinging Gavin and the doctor at each other as a wheel rose on me beech-root or sank for a moment in a pool. I suppose e wood was a pretty sight that day, the pines only white here they had met the snow, as if the numbed painter had ft his work unfinished, the brittle twigs snapping overhead, e water as black as tar. But it matters little what the ood was like. Within a squirrel's leap of it an old woman as standing at the door of a mud house listening for the proach of the trap that was to take her to the poorhouse. an you think of the beauty of the day now?

Nanny was not crying. She had redd up her house for e last time and put on her black merino. Her mouth was ide open while she listened. If you had addressed her you ould have thought her polite and stupid. Look at her. A ubby-faced woman she is now, with a swollen body, and no

one has heeded her much these thirty years. I can tell
something; it is almost droll. Nanny Webster was onc
gay flirt, and in Airlie Square there is a weaver with
unsteady head who thought all the earth of her. His lo
has taken a foot from his stature, and gone are Nan
raven locks on which he used to place his adoring ha
Down in Airlie Square he is weaving for his life, and H
is Nanny ripe for the poorhouse, and between them is
hill where they were lovers. That is all the story s
when Nanny heard the dog-cart she screamed.

No neighbour was with her. If you think this hard, i
because you do not understand. Perhaps Nanny had ne
been very lovable except to one man, and him, it is said,
lost through her own vanity; but there was much in he
like. The neighbours, of whom there were two not a h
dred yards away, would have been with her now, but i
feared to hurt her feelings. No heart opens to sympa
without letting in delicacy, and these poor people knew
Nanny would not like them to see her being taken av
For a week they had been aware of what was coming,
they had been most kind to her, but that hideous word,
poorhouse, they had not uttered. Poorhouse is not to
spoken in Thrums, though it is nothing to tell a man
you see death in his face. Did Nanny think they knew w
she was going? was a question they whispered to each ot
and her suffering eyes cut scars on their hearts. So
that the hour had come they called their children into t
houses and pulled down their blinds.

"If you would like to see her by yourself," the d
said eagerly, to Gavin, as the horse drew up at Nan
gate, "I'll wait with the horse. Not," he added, ha
"that I feel sorry for her. We are doing her a kindness.

They dismounted together, however, and Nanny, who
run from the trap into the house, watched them from
window.

McQueen saw her and said, glumly, "I should have
alone, for if you pray she is sure to break down. Mr.
hart, could you not pray cheerfully?"

"You don't look very cheerful yourself," Gavin said, s

"Nonsense," answered the doctor. "I have no pat
with this false sentiment. Stand still, Lightning, an
thankful you are not your master to-day."

The door stood open, and Nanny was crouching again
opposite wall of the room, such a poor, dull kitchen,

ou would have thought the furniture had still to be brought ito it. The blanket and the piece of old carpet that was anny's coverlet were already packed in her box. The plate ack was empty. Only the round table and the two chairs nd the stools and some pans, were being left behind.

"Well, Nanny," the doctor said, trying to bluster, "I have ome, and you see Mr. Dishart is with me."

Nanny rose bravely. She knew the doctor was good to er, and she wanted to thank him. I have not seen a great eal of the world myself, but often the sweet politeness of ne aged poor has struck me as beautiful. Nanny dropped a urtesy, an ungainly one maybe, but it was an old woman iving the best she had.

"Thank you kindly, sirs," she said; and then two pairs of yes dropped before hers.

"Please to take a chair," she added, timidly. It is strange o know that at that awful moment, for let none tell me it vas less than awful, the old woman was the one who could peak.

Both men sat down, for they would have hurt Nanny by emaining standing. Some ministers would have known the ight thing to say to her, but Gavin dared not let himself peak. I have again to remind you that he was only one nd twenty.

The doctor thought it best that they should depart at once. Ie rose.

"Oh, no, doctor," cried Nanny, in alarm.

"But you are ready?"

"Ay," she said, "I have been ready this twa hours, but ou micht wait a minute. Hendry Munn and Andrew Al- ardyce is coming yont the road, and they would see me."

"Wait, doctor," Gavin said.

"Thank you kindly, sir," answered Nanny.

"But, Nanny," the doctor said, "you must remember what told you about the poo—, about the place you are going to. t is a fine house, and you will be very happy in it."

"Ay, I'll be happy in't," Nanny faltered, "but, doctor, if I ould just hae bidden on here though I wasna happy!"

"Think of the food you will get; broth nearly every day."

"It—it'll be terrible enjoyable," Nanny said.

"And there will be pleasant company for you always," ontinued the doctor, "and a nice room to sit in. Why, after ou have been there a week you won't be the same woman."

"That's it!" cried Nanny, with sudden passion. "Na, na;

I'll be a woman on the poor's rates. Oh, mither, mither, y
little thocht when you bore me that I would come to this!"

"Nanny," the doctor said, rising again, "I am ashamed
you."

"I humbly speir your forgiveness, sir," she said, "and y
micht bide just a wee yet. I've been ready to gang th
twa hours, but now that the machine is at the gate, I di
ken how it is, but I'm terrible sweer to come awa'. Oh, I
Dishart, it's richt true what the doctor says about the—
place, but I canna just take it in. I'm—I'm gey auld."

"You will often get out to see your friends," was all Ga
could say.

"Na, na, na," she cried, "dinna say that; I'll gang,
you mauna bid me ever come out, except in a hearse. Di
let onybody in Thrums look on my face again."

"We must go," said the doctor, firmly. "Put on y
mutch, Nanny."

"I dinna need to put on a mutch," she answered, wit
faint flush of pride. "I have a bonnet."

She took the bonnet from her bed, and put it on slowly
"Are you sure there's naebody looking?" she asked.

The doctor glanced at the minister, and Gavin rose.

"Let us pray," he said, and the three went down on t
knees.

It was not the custom of Auld Licht ministers to le
any house without offering up a prayer in it, and to r
always seemed that when Gavin prayed, he was at the k
of God. The little minister pouring himself out in pr
in a humble room, with awed people round him who k
much more of the world than he, his voice at times t
and again a squeal, and his hands clasped not gracef
may have been only a comic figure, but we were old-f
ioned, and he seemed to make us better men. If I only k
the way, I would draw him as he was, and not fear to
him too mean a man for you to read about. He had
been long in Thrums before he knew that we talked
of his prayers, and that doubtless puffed him up a l
Sometimes, I daresay, he rose from his knees feeling tha
had prayed well to-day, which is a dreadful charge to l
against any one. But it was not always so, nor was
now.

I am not speaking harshly of this man, whom I have
beyond all others, when I say that Nannie came be
him and his prayer. Had he been of God's own image

rained, he would have forgotten all else in his Maker's presnce, but Nanny was speaking, too, and her words choked is. At first she only whispered, but soon what was eating er heart burst out painfully, and she did not know that the inister had stopped.

They were such moans as these that brought him back to earth:

"I'll hae to gang . . . I'm a base woman no to be mair thankfu' to them that is so good to me . . . I dinna like to orig wi' them to take a roundabout road, and I'm sair fleid a' he Roods will see me . . . If it could just be said to poor Sanders when he comes back that I died hurriedly, syne he would be able to haud up his head . . . Oh, mither! . . . I wish terrible they had come and ta'en me at nicht . . . It's a dog-cart, and I was praying it micht be a cart, so that they could cover me wi' straw."

"This is more than I can stand," the doctor cried.

Nanny rose frightened.

"I've tried you, sair," she said, "but, oh, I'm grateful, and I'm ready now."

They all advanced towards the door without another word, and Nanny even tried to smile. But in the middle of the door something came over her, and she stood there. Gavin took her hand, and it was cold. She looked from one to the other, her mouth opening and shutting.

"I canna help it," she said.

"It's cruel hard," muttered the doctor. "I knew this woman when she was a lassie."

The little minister stretched out his hands.

"Have pity on her, O God!" he prayed, with the presumptuousness of youth.

Nanny heard the words.

"Oh, God," she cried, "you micht!"

God needs no minister to tell Him what to do, but it was His will that the poorhouse should not have this woman. He made use of a strange instrument, no other than the Egyptian who now opened the mud house door.

CHAPTER XIII.

SECOND COMING OF THE EGYPTIAN WOMAN.

THE gypsy had been passing the house, perhaps on her wa to Thrums for gossip, and it was only curiosity, born su denly of Gavin's cry, that made her enter. On finding he self in unexpected company she retained hold of the doo and to the amazed minister she seemed for a moment to ha stepped into the mud house from his garden. Her ey danced, however, as they recognised him, and then he har ened. "This is no place for you," he was saying fierce when Nanny, too distraught to think, fell crying at the Egy tian's feet.

"They are taking me to the poorhouse," she sobbed; "din let them, dinna let them."

The Egyptian's arms clasped her, and the Egyptian kiss a sallow cheek that had once been as fair as yours, mada who may read this story. No one had caressed Nanny f many years, but do you think she was too poor and old care for these young arms round her neck? There are thc who say that women cannot love each other, but it is not tr Woman is not undeveloped man, but something better, a Gavin and the doctor knew it as they saw Nanny clinging her protector. When the gypsy turned with flashing eyes the two men she might have been a mother guarding h child.

"How dare you!" she cried, stamping her foot; and th quaked like malefactors.

"You don't see—" Gavin began, but her indignation stopp him.

"You coward!" she said.

Even the doctor had been impressed, so that he now a dressed the gypsy respectfully.

"This is all very well," he said, "but a woman's sy pathy—"

"A woman!—ah, if I could be a man for only f minutes!"

She clenched her little fists, and again turned to Nanny.

"You poor dear," she said, tenderly, "I won't let th take you away."

She looked triumphantly at both minister and doctor, as who had foiled them in their cruel designs.

"Go!" she said, pointing grandly to the door.

"Is this the Egyptian of the riots," the doctor said in a low voice to Gavin, "or is she a queen? Hoots, man, don't look so shamefaced. We are not criminals. Say something."

Then to the Egyptian Gavin said, firmly:

"You mean well, but you are doing this poor woman a cruelty in holding out hopes to her that cannot be realised. Sympathy is not meal and bedclothes, and these are what she needs."

"And you who live in luxury," retorted the girl, "would send her to the poorhouse for them. I thought better of you!"

"Tuts!" said the doctor, losing patience. "Mr. Dishart gives more than any other man in Thrums to the poor, and he is not to be preached to by a gypsy. We are waiting for you, Nanny."

"Ay, I'm coming," said Nanny, leaving the Egyptian. "I'll hae to gang, lassie. Dinna greet for me."

But the Egyptian said, "No, you are not going. It is these men who are going. Go, sirs, and leave us."

"And you will provide for Nanny?" asked the doctor, contemptuously.

"Yes."

"And where is the siller to come from?"

"That is my affair, and Nanny's. Begone, both of you. She shall never want again. See how the very mention of your going brings back life to her face."

"I won't begone," the doctor said, roughly, "till I see the colour of your siller."

"Oh, the money," said the Egyptian, scornfully. She put her hand into her pocket confidently, as if used to well-filled purses, but could only draw out two silver pieces.

"I had forgotten," she said aloud, though speaking to herself.

"I thought so," said the cynical doctor. "Come, Nanny."

"You presume to doubt me!" the Egyptian said, blocking his way to the door.

"How could I presume to believe you?" he answered. "You are a beggar by profession, and yet talk as if—pooh, nonsense."

"I would live on terrible little," Nanny whispered, "and Sanders will be out again in August month."

"Seven shillings a week," rapped out the doctor.

"Is that all?" the Egyptian asked. "She shall have it."

"When?"

"At once. No, it is not possible to-night, but to-morro I will bring five pounds; no, I will send it; no, you mu come for it."

"And where, O daughter of Dives, do you reside?" t doctor asked.

No doubt the Egyptian could have found a ready answ had her pity for Nanny been less sincere; as it was s hesitated, wanting to propitiate the doctor, while holding h secret fast.

"I only asked," McQueen said, eyeing her curiously, "b cause when I make an appointment I like to know where is to be held. But I suppose you are suddenly to rise o of the ground as you have done to-day, and did six wee ago."

"Whether I rise out of the ground or not," the gyp said, keeping her temper with an effort, "there will be five-pound note in my hand. You will meet me to-morr about this hour at—say the Kaims of Cushie?"

"No," said the doctor, after a moment's pause; "I wo Even if I went to the Kaims I should not find you the Why can you not come to me?"

"Why do you carry a woman's hair," replied the Egypti "in that locket on your chain?"

Whether she was speaking of what she knew, or this w only a chance shot, I cannot tell, but the doctor stepped ba from her hastily, and could not help looking down at t locket.

"Yes," said the Egyptian, calmly, "it is still shut; but w do you sometimes open it at nights?"

"Lassie," the old doctor cried, "are you a witch?"

"Perhaps," she said; "but I ask for no answer to questions. If you have your secrets, why may I not h mine? Now will you meet me at the Kaims?"

"No; I distrust you more than ever. Even if you came would be to play with me as you have done already. H can a vagrant have five pounds in her pocket when does not have five shillings on her back?"

"You are a cruel, hard man," the Egyptian said, beginn to lose hope. "But, see," she cried, brightening, "look this ring. Do you know its value?"

She held up her finger, but the stone would not live the dull light.

"I see it is gold," the doctor said, cautiously, and

smiled at the ignorance that made him look only at the frame.

"Certainly, it is gold," said Gavin, equally stupid.

"Mercy on us!" Nanny cried; "I believe it's what they call a diamond."

"How did you come by it?" the doctor asked, suspiciously.

"I thought we had agreed not to ask each other questions," the Egyptian answered, drily. "But, see, I will give it to you to hold in hostage. If I am not at the Kaims to get it back you can keep it."

The doctor took the ring in his hand and examined it curiously.

"There is a quirk in this," he said at last, "that I don't like. Take back your ring, lassie. Mr. Dishart, give Nanny your arm, and I'll carry her box to the machine."

Now all this time Gavin had been in the dire distress of a man possessed of two minds, of which one said, "This is a true woman," and the other, "Remember the seventeenth of October." They were at war within him, and he knew that he must take a side, yet no sooner had he cast one out than he invited it back. He did not answer the doctor.

"Unless," McQueen said, nettled by his hesitation, "you trust this woman's word."

Gavin tried honestly to weigh those two minds against each other, but could not prevent impulse jumping into one of the scales.

"You do trust me," the Egyptian said, with wet eyes; and now that he looked on her again—

"Yes," he said, firmly, "I trust you," and the words that had been so difficult to say were the right words. He had no more doubt of it.

"Just think a moment first," the doctor warned him. "I decline to have anything to do with this matter. You will go to the Kaims for the siller?"

"If it is necessary," said Gavin.

"It is necessary," the Egyptian said.

"Then I will go."

Nanny took his hand timidly, and would have kissed it had he been less than a minister.

"You dare not, man," the doctor said, gruffly, "make an appointment with this gypsy. Think of what will be said in Thrums."

I honour Gavin for the way in which he took this warning. For him, who was watched from the rising of his con-

gregation to their lying down, whose every movement wa expected to be a text to Thrums, it was no small thin that he had promised. This he knew, but he only reddene because the doctor had implied an offensive thing in woman's presence.

"You forget yourself, doctor," he said, sharply.

"Send some one in your place," advised the doctor, wh liked the little minister.

"He must come himself and alone," said the Egyptia "You must both give me your promise not to mention wh is Nanny's friend, and she must promise, too."

"Well," said the doctor, buttoning up his coat, "I cann keep my horse freezing any longer. Remember, Mr. Dishar you take the sole responsibility of this."

"I do," said Gavin, "and with the utmost confidence."

"Give him the ring then, lassie," said McQueen.

She handed the minister the ring, but he would not take

"I have your word," he said; "that is sufficient."

Then the Egyptian gave him the first look that he cou think of afterwards without misgivings.

"So be it," said the doctor. "Get the money, and I w say nothing about it, unless I have reason to think that has been dishonestly come by. Don't look so frightened me, Nanny. I hope for your sake that her stocking-foot full of gold."

"Surely it's worth risking," Nanny said, not very brightl "when the minister's on her side."

"Ay, but on whose side, Nanny?" asked the doctor. "La sie, I bear you no grudge; will you not tell me who y are?"

"Only a puir gypsy, your honour," said the girl, becomi mischievous, now that she had gained her point; "only wandering hallen-shaker, and will I tell you your fortu my pretty gentleman?"

"No, you sha'n't," replied the doctor, plunging his han so hastily into his pockets that Gavin laughed.

"I don't need to look at your hand," said the gypsy, can read your fortune in your face."

She looked at him fixedly, so that he fidgeted.

"I see you," said the Egyptian in a sepulchral voice, a speaking slowly, "become very frail. Your eyesight has most gone. You are sitting alone in a cauld room, cooki your ain dinner ower a feeble fire. The soot is falling d the lum. Your bearish manners towards women have dri

he servant lassie frae your house, and your wife beats you."

"Ay, you spoil your prophecy there," the doctor said, considerably relieved, "for I'm not married; my pipe's the only wife I ever had."

"You will be married by that time," continued the Egyptian, frowning at this interruption, "for I see your wife. She is a shrew. She marries you in your dotage. She lauchs at you in company. She doesna allow you to smoke."

"Away with you, you jade," cried the doctor, in a fury, and feeling nervously for his pipe. "Mr. Dishart, you had better stay and arrange this matter as you choose, but I want a word with you outside."

"And you're no angry wi' me, doctor, are you?" asked Nanny, wistfully. "You've been richt good to me, but I canna thole the thocht o' that place. And, oh, doctor, you winna tell naebody that I was so near ta'en to it?"

In the garden McQueen said to Gavin:

"You may be right, Mr. Dishart, in this matter, for there is this in our favour, that the woman can gain nothing by tricking us. She did seem to feel for Nanny. But who can she be? You saw she could put on and off the Scotch tongue as easily as if it were a cap."

"She is as much a mystery to me as to you," Gavin answered, "but she will give me the money, and that is all I ask of her."

"Ay, that remains to be seen. But take care of yourself; a man's second childhood begins when a woman gets hold of him."

"Don't alarm yourself about me, doctor. I daresay she is only one of those gypsies from the South. They are said to be wealthy, many of them, and even, when they like, to have a grand manner. The Thrums people had no doubt but that she was what she seemed to be."

"Ay, but what does she seem to be? Even that puzzles me. And then there is this mystery about her which she admits herself, though perhaps only to play with us."

"Perhaps," said Gavin, "she is only taking precautions against her discovery by the police. You must remember her part in the riots."

"Yes, but we never learned how she was able to play that part. Besides, there is no fear in her, or she would not have ventured back to Thrums. However, good luck attend you. But be wary. You saw how she kept her feet among her

shalls and wills? Never trust a Scotch man or woman wh does not come to grief among them."

The doctor took his seat in the dog-cart.

"And, Mr. Dishart," he called out, "that was all nonsen about the locket."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MINISTER DANCES TO THE WOMAN'S PIPING.

GAVIN let the doctor's warnings fall in the grass. In h joy over Nanny's deliverance he jumped the garden ga whose hinges were of yarn, and cleverly caught his hat as was leaving his head in protest. He then reëntered the m house staidly. Pleasant was the change. Nanny's home w as a clock that had been run out, and is set going aga Already the old woman was unpacking her box, to increa the distance between herself and the poorhouse. But Gav only saw her in the background, for the Egyptian, singing her work, had become the heart of the house. She had flu her shawl over Nanny's shoulders, and was at the firepl breaking peats with the leg of a stool. She turned merr to the minister to ask him to chop up his staff for firewo and he would have answered wittily but could not. Th as often, the beauty of the Egyptian surprised him i silence.

"Nanny and I are to have a dish of tea, as soon as have set things to rights," she told him. "Do you thi we should invite the minister, Nanny?"

"We couldna dare," Nanny answered, quickly. "Yo excuse her, Mr. Dishart, for the presumption?"

"Presumption!" said the Egyptian, making a face.

"Lassie," Nanny said, fearful to offend her new frie yet horrified at this affront to the minister, "I ken you m weel, but Mr. Dishart'll think you're putting yoursel' an equality wi' him." She added in a whisper, "Dinna be free; he's the Auld Licht minister."

The gypsy bowed with mock awe, but Gavin let it pa He had, indeed, forgotten that he was anybody in particul and was anxious to stay to tea.

"But there is no water," he remembered, "and is th any tea?"

"I am going out for them and for some other things," ie Egyptian explained. "But no," she continued, reflectively, f I go for the tea, you must go for the water."

"Lassie," cried Nanny, "mind wha you're speaking to. To end a minister to the well!"

"I will go," said Gavin, recklessly lifting the pitcher. The well is in the wood, I think?"

"Gie me the pitcher, Mr. Dishart," said Nanny, in dis-ess. "What a town there would be if you was seen wi't!"

"Then he must remain here and keep the house till we ome back," said the Egyptian, and thereupon departed, with friendly wave of her hand to the minister.

"She's an awfu' lassie," Nanny said, apologetically, "but 'll just be the way she has been brought up."

"She has been very good to you, Nanny."

"She has; leastwise she promises to be. Mr. Dishart, she's wa'; what if she doesna come back?"

Nanny spoke nervously, and Gavin drew a long face.

"I think she will," he said, faintly. "I am confident of t," he added, in the same voice.

"And has she the siller?"

"I believe in her," said Gavin, so doggedly that his own vords reassured him. "She has an excellent heart.

"I suppose she'll gie you the money," she said, "and syne ou'll gie me the seven shillings a week?"

"That seems the best plan," Gavin answered.

Her mind relieved on this matter, the old woman set off or the well.

Gavin returned to the fi e and watched a girl in it in n officer's cloak playing at hide-and-seek with soldiers. After a time he sighed, then looked round sharply to see vho had sighed, then, absent-mindedly, lifted the empty kettle nd placed it on the glowing peats. He was standing glaring t the kettle, his arms folded, when Nanny returned from the well.

"I've been thinking," she said, "o' something that proves he lassie to be just an Egyptian. Ay, I noticed she wasna aane awed when I said you was the Auld Licht minister. Weel, I'se uphaud that came frae her living ower muckle n the open air. Is there no' a smell o' burning in he house?"

"I have noticed it," Gavin answered, sniffing, "since you ame in. I was busy until then, putting on the kettle. The mell is becoming worse."

Nanny had seen the empty kettle on the fire as he beg to speak, and so solved the mystery. Her first thought v to snatch the kettle out of the blaze, but remembering w had put it there, she dared not. She sidled towards hearth instead, and saying, craftily, "Ay, here it is; it's clout among the peats," softly laid the kettle on the earth floor. It was still red with sparks, however, when the gy reappeared.

"Who burned the kettle?" she asked, ignoring Nan signs.

"Lassie," Nanny said, "it was me;" but Gavin, flushi confessed his guilt.

"Oh, you stupid!" exclaimed the Egyptian, shaking two ounces of tea (which then cost six shillings the pou in his face.

At this Nanny wrung her hands, crying, "That's w than swearing."

"If men," said the gypsy, severely, "would keep their ha in their pockets all day, the world's affairs would be m easily managed."

"Wheesht!" cried Nanny, "if Mr. Dishart cared to his mind to it, he could make the kettle boil quicker t you or me. But his thochts is on higher things."

"No higher than this," retorted the gypsy, holding hand level with her brow. "Confess, Mr. Dishart, that is the exact height of what you were thinking about. Nanny, he is blushing as if I meant that he had been think about me. He cannot answer, Nanny; we have fo him out."

"And kindly of him it is no to answer," said Nanny, had been examining the gypsy's various purchases; "for w could he answer, except that he would need to be sur living a thousand years afore he could spare five min on you or me? Of course, it would be different if we under him."

"And yet," said the Egyptian, with great solemnity, is to drink tea at that very table. I hope you are sens of the honour, Nanny."

"Am I no?" said Nanny, whose education had not inclu sarcasm. "I'm trying to keep frae thinking o't till he's g in case I should let the teapot fall."

"You have nothing to thank me for, Nanny," said Ga "but much for which to thank this—this—"

"This haggarty-taggarty Egyptian," suggested the

hen, looking at Gavin curiously, she said, "But my name
s Babbie."

"That's short for Barbara," said Nanny; "but Babbie
vhat?"

"Yes, Babbie Watt," replied the gypsy, as if one name
vere as good as another.

"Weel, then, lift the lid off the kettle, Babbie," said Nanny,
for it's boiling ower."

Gavin looked at Nanny with admiration and envy, for she
had said Babbie as coolly as if it was the name of a pepper-
box.

Babbie tucked up her sleeves to wash Nanny's cups and
saucers, which even in the most prosperous days of the
mud house had only been in use once a week, and Gavin was
so eager to help that he bumped his head on the plate-rack.

"Sit there," said Babbie, authoritatively, pointing, with a
cup in her hand, to a stool, "and don't rise till I give you
permission."

To Nanny's amazement, he did as he was bid.

"I got the things in the little shop you told me of," the
Egyptian continued, addressing the mistress of the house,
"but the horrid man would not give them to me until he
had seen my money."

"Enoch would be suspicious o' you," Nanny explained, "you
being an Egyptian."

"Ah," said Babbie, with a side glance at the minister, "I
am only an Egyptian. Is that why you dislike me, Mr.
Dishart?"

Gavin hesitated foolishly over his answer, and the Egyp-
tian, with a towel round her waist, made a pretty gesture
of despair.

"He neither likes you nor dislikes you," Nanny explained,
"you forget he's a minister."

"That is what I cannot endure," said Babbie, putting the
towel to her eyes, "to be neither liked nor disliked. Please
hate me, Mr. Dishart, if you cannot lo—ove me."

Her face was behind the towel, and Gavin could not
decide whether it was the face or the towel that shook with
agitation. He gave Nanny a look that asked, "Is she really
crying?" and Nanny telegraphed back, "I question it."

"Come, come," said the minister, gallantly, "I did not say
that I disliked you."

Even this desperate compliment had not the desired effect,
for the gypsy continued to sob behind her screen.

"I can honestly say," went on Gavin, as solemnly as making a statement in a court of justice, "that I like yo

Then the Egyptian let drop her towel, and replied, w equal solemnity:

"Oh, tank oo! Nanny, the minister says me is a dc 'ittle dirl."

"He didna gang that length," said Nanny, sharply, to co Gavin's confusion. "Set the things, Babbie, and I'll ma the tea."

The Egyptian obeyed demurely, pretending to wipe h eyes every time Gavin looked at her. He frowned at th and then she affected to be too overcome to go on with h work.

"Tell me, Nanny," she asked, presently, "what sort man this Enoch is, from whom I bought the things?"

"He is not very regular, I fear," answered Gavin, w felt that he had sat silent and self-conscious on his stool t long.

"Do you mean that he drinks?" asked Babbie.

"No, I mean regular in his attendance."

The Egyptian's face showed no enlightenment.

"His attendance at church," Gavin explained.

"He's far frae it," said Nanny, "and as a body kens, J Cruickshanks, the atheist, has the wite o' that. The scou drel telled Enoch that the great ministers in Edinbury a London believed in no hell except sic as your ain conscien made for you, and ever since syne Enoch has been carel about the future state."

"Ah," said Babbie, waving the Church aside, "what want to know is whether he is a single man."

"He is not," Gavin replied, "but why do you want know that?"

"Because single men are such gossips. I am sorry he not single, as I want him to repeat to everybody what I t him."

"Trust him to tell Susy," said Nanny, "and Susy to t the town."

"His wife is a gossip?"

"Ay, she's aye tonguing, especially about her teeth. They folk wi' siller, and she has a set o' false teeth. It's f scumfishing to hear her blawing about thae teeth, she's fleid we dinna ken that they're false."

Nanny had spoken jealously, but suddenly she tremb with apprehension.

"Babbie," she cried, "you didna speak about the poorhouse to Enoch?"

The Egyptian shook her head, though of the poorhouse she had been forced to speak, for Enoch, having seen the doctor going home alone, insisted on knowing why.

"But I knew," the gypsy said, "that the Thrums people would be very unhappy until they discovered where you get the money I am to give you, and as that is a secret, I hinted to Enoch that your benefactor is Mr. Dishart."

"You should not have said that," interposed Gavin. "I cannot foster such a deception."

"They will foster it without your help," the Egyptian said. "Besides, if you choose, you can say you get the money from a friend."

"Ay, you can say that," Nanny entreated with such eagerness that Babbie remarked, a little bitterly:

"There is no fear of Nanny's telling any one that the friend is a gypsy girl."

"Na, na," agreed Nanny, again losing Babbie's sarcasm. "I winna let on. It's so queer to be befriended by an Egyptian."

"It is scarcely respectable," Babbie said.

"It's no," answered simple Nanny.

I suppose Nanny's unintentional cruelty did hurt Babbie as much as Gavin thought. She winced, and her face had two expressions, the one cynical, the other pained. Her mouth curled as if to tell the minister that gratitude was nothing to her, but her eyes had to struggle to keep back a tear. Gavin was touched, and she saw it, and for a moment they were two people who understood each other.

"I, at least," Gavin said, in a low voice, "will know who is the benefactress, and think none the worse of her because she is a gypsy."

At this Babbie smiled gratefully to him, and then both laughed, for they had heard Nanny remarking to the kettle, "But I wouldna hae been nane angry if she had telled Enoch that the minister was to take his tea here. Susy'll no believe't though I tell her, as tell her I will."

To Nanny the table now presented a rich appearance, for besides the teapot there were butter and loaf-bread and cheesies: a biscuit of which only Thrums knows the secret.

"Draw in your chair, Mr. Dishart," she said, in suppressed excitement.

"Yes," said Babbie, "you take this chair, Mr. Dishart,

and Nanny will have that one, and I can sit humbly on t
stool."

But Nanny held up her hands in horror.

"Keep us a'!" she exclaimed; "the lassie thinks her a
me is to sit down wi' the minister! We're no to gang th
length, Babbie; we're just to stand and serve him, and sy
we'll sit down when he has risen."

"Delightful!" said Babbie, clapping her hands. "Nann
you kneel on that side of him, and I will kneel on this. Y
will hold the butter and I the biscuits."

But Gavin, as this girl was always forgetting, was a lo
of creation.

"Sit down both of you at once!" he thundered. "I co
mand you."

Then the two women fell into their seats,—Nanny in terr
Babbie affecting it.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MINISTER BEWITCHED—SECOND SERMON AGAINST WOMI

To Nanny it was a dizzying experience to sit at the h
of her own table, and, with assumed calmness, invite
minister not to spare the loaf-bread. Babbie's prattle,
even Gavin's answers, were but an indistinct noise to her,
be as little regarded, in the excitement of watching whet
Mr. Dishart noticed that there was a knife for the butter,
the music of the river by a man who is catching trout. Ev
time Gavin's cup went to his lips Nanny calculated (c
rectly) how much he had drunk, and yet, when the ri
moment arrived, she asked in the English voice that is fa
ionable at ceremonies, "if his cup was toom."

Perhaps it was well that Nanny had these matters
engross her, for though Gavin spoke freely, he was say
nothing of lasting value, and some of his remarks to
Egyptian, if preserved for the calmer contemplation of
morrow, might have seemed frivolous to himself. Usu
his observations were scrambled for, like ha'pence at a w
ding, but to-day they were only for one person. Infe
by the Egyptian's high spirits, Gavin had laid aside the m
ister with his hat, and what was left was only a young m
He who had stamped his feet at thought of a soldier's c
now wanted to be reminded of it. The little minister,

ed to address himself in terms of scorn every time he sted an hour, was at present dallying with a teaspoon. e even laughed boisterously, flinging back his head, and tle knew that behind Nanny's smiling face was a terrible ead, because his chair had once given way before.

Even though our thoughts are not with our company, the ention of our name is a bell to which we usually answer. earing hers, Nanny started.

"You can tell me, Nanny," the Egyptian had said, with arch look at the minister. "Oh, Nanny, for shame! How n you expect to follow our conversation when you only ten to Mr. Dishart?"

"She is saying, Nanny," Gavin broke in, almost gaily for minister, "that she saw me recently wearing a cloak. ou know I have no such thing."

"Na," Nanny answered, artlessly, "you have just the thin own coat wi' the braid round it, forby the ane you have the now."

"You see," Gavin said to Babbie, "I could not have a new ckcloth, not to speak of a cloak, without everybody in rums knowing about it. I dare say Nanny knows all about e braid, and even what it cost."

"Three bawbees the yard at Kyowowy's shop," replied anny, promptly, "and your mother sewed it on. Sam'l irweather has the marrows o't on his top-coat. No that has the same look on him."

"Nevertheless," Babbie persisted, "I am sure the minister s a cloak; but perhaps he is ashamed of it. No doubt it hidden away in the garret."

"Na, we would hae kent o't if it was there," said Nanny.

"But it may be in a chest, and the chest may be locked," e Egyptian suggested.

"Ay, but the kist in the garret isna locked," Nanny anered.

"How do you get to know all these things, Nanny?" asked avin, sighing.

"Your congregation tells me. Naebody would lay by news out a minister."

"But how do they know?"

"I dinna ken. They just find out, because they're so fond you."

"I hope they will never become so fond of me as that," id Babbie. "Still, Nanny, the minister's cloak is hidden mewhere."

"Losh, what would make him hod it?" demanded old woman. "Folk that has cloaks doesna bury them boxes."

At the word "bury" Gavin's hand fell on the table, he returned to Nanny apprehensively.

"That would depend on how the cloak was got," said cruel Egyptian. "If it was not his own—"

"Lassie," cried Nanny, "behave yoursel'."

"Or if he found it in his possession against his w suggested Gavin, slyly. "He might have got it from s one who picked it up cheap."

"From his wife, for instance," said Babbie, where Gavin suddenly became interested in the floor.

"Ay, ay, the minister was hitting at you there, Bab Nanny explained, "for the way you made off wi' the tain's cloak. The Thrums folk wonder less at your ta it than at your no keeping it. It's said to be michty gra

"It was rather like the one the minister's wife gave l said Babbie.

"The minister has neither a wife nor a cloak," ret Nanny.

"He isn't married?" asked Babbie, the picture of credulity.

Nanny gathered from the minister's face that he de to her the task of enlightening this ignorant girl, so sh plied, with emphasis, "Na, they hinna got him yet, an cheated if it doesna tak them all their time."

Thus do the best of women sell their sex for nothi

"I did wonder," said the Egyptian, gravely, "at mere woman's daring to marry such a minister."

"Ay," replied Nanny, spiritedly, "but there's da limmers wherever there's a single man."

"So I have often suspected," said Babbie, duly sho "But, Nanny, I was told the minister had a wife, by who said he saw her."

"He lied, then," answered Nanny, turning to Gavi further instructions.

"But, see, the minister does not deny the horrid c himself."

"No, and for the reason he didna deny the cloak cause it's no worth his while. I'll tell you wha your l had seen. It would be somebody that would like Mrs. Dishart. There's a hantle o' that kind. Ay, but wishing winna land a woman in a manse."

"It was one of the soldiers," Babbie said, "who told me bout her. He said Mr. Dishart introduced her to him."

"Sojers!" cried Nanny. "I could never thole the name ' them. Sanders in his young days hankered after joining hem, and so he would, if it hadna been for the fechting. \y, and now they've ta'en him awa to the gaol, and sworn .es about him. Dinna put any faith in sojers, lassie."

"I was told," Babbie went on, "that the minister's wife vas rather like me."

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated Nanny, so fervently that all hree suddenly sat back from the table.

"I'm no meaning," Nanny continued, hurriedly, fearing to ffend her benefactress, "but what you're the bonniest tid ever saw out o' an almanack. But you would ken Mr.)ishart's contempt for bonny faces if you had heard his ermon against them. I didna hear it mysel', for I'm no \uld Licht, but it did the work o' the town for an aucht .ays."

If Nanny had not taken her eyes off Gavin for the mo- ient she would have known that he was now anxious to hange the topic. Babbie saw it, and became suspicious.

"When did he preach against the wiles of women, Nanny?"

"It was long ago," said Gavin, hastily.

"No so very lang syne," corrected Nanny. It was the ;abbath after the sojers was in Thrums; the day you hanged your text so hurriedly. Some thocht you wasna veel, but Lang Tammas—"

"Thomas Whamond is too officious," Gavin said, with dig- ity. "I forbid you, Nanny, to repeat his story."

"But what made you change your text?" asked Babbie.

"You see he winna tell," Nanny said, wistfully. "Ay, dinna deny but what I would like richt to ken. But the ession's as puzzled as yoursel', Babbie."

"Perhaps more puzzled," answered the Egyptian, with a mile that challenged Gavin's frowns to combat and over- hrow them. "What surprises me, Mr. Dishart, is that such great man can stoop to see whether women are pretty or iot. It was very good of you to remember me to-day. I uppose you recognised me by my frock?"

"By your face," he replied, boldly; "by your eyes."

"Nanny," exclaimed the Egyptian, "did you hear what he minister said?"

"Woe is me," answered Nanny, "I missed it."

"He says he would know me anywhere by my eyes."

"So would I mysel'," said Nanny.

"Then what colour are they, Mr. Dishart?" demand Babbie. "Don't speak, Nanny, for I want to expose him."

She closed her eyes tightly. Gavin was in a quanda I suppose he had looked at her eyes too long to kn much about them.

"Blue," he guessed at last.

"Na, they're black," said Nanny, who had doubtl known this for an hour. I am always marvelling over t cleverness of women, as every one must see who reads t story.

"No but what they micht be blue in some lichts," Nan added, out of respect to the minister.

"Oh, don't defend him, Nanny," said Babbie, looki reproachfully at Gavin. "I don't see that any minister ha right to denounce women, when he is so ignorant of subject. I will say it, Nanny, and you need not kick beneath the table."

Was not all this intoxicating to the little minister, w had never till now met a girl on equal terms? At twen one a man is a musical instrument given to the other s but it is not as instruments learned at school, for wh She sits down to it, she cannot tell what tune she is ab to play. That is because she has no notion of what instrument is capable. Babbie's kind-heartedness, gaiety, her coquetry, her moments of sadness, had bee witch's fingers, and Gavin was still trembling under t touch. Even in being taken to task by her there wa charm, for every pout of her mouth, every shake of head, said, "You like me, and therefore you have gi me the right to tease you." Men sign these agreeme without reading them. But, indeed, man is a stupid ani at the best, and thinks all his life that he did not propose u he blurted out, "I love you."

It was later than it should have been when the mini left the mud house, and even then he only put on his because Babbie said that she must go.

"But not your way," she added. "I go into the w and vanish. You know, Nanny, I live up a tree."

"Dinna say that," said Nanny, anxiously, "or I'll fleid about the siller."

"Don't fear about it. Mr. Dishart will get some of it morrow at the Kaims. I would bring it here, but I c come so far to-morrow."

'Then I'll hae peace to the end o' my days," said the woman, "and, Babbie, I wish the same to you wi' all heart."

'Ah," Babbie replied, mournfully, "I have read my forne, Nanny, and there is not much happiness in it."

'I hope that is not true," Gavin said, simply.

They were standing at the door, and she was looking toards the hill, perhaps without seeing it. All at once came to Gavin that this fragile girl might have a history r sadder and more turbulent than his.

'Do you really care?" she asked, without looking at him.

'Yes," he said, stoutly, "I care."

'Because you do not know me," she said.

'Because I do know you," he answered.

Now she did look at him.

'I believe," she said, making a discovery, "that you misderstand me less than those who have known me longer."

This was a perilous confidence, for it at once made vin say "Babbie."

'Ah," she answered, frankly, "I am glad to hear that. thought you did not really like me, because you never lled me by my name."

Gavin drew a great breath.

'That was not the reason," he said.

The reason was now unmistakable.

'I was wrong," said the Egyptian, a little alarmed; "you not understand me at all."

She returned to Nanny, and Gavin set off, holding his ad high, his brain in a whirl. Five minutes afterwards, en Nanny was at the fire, the diamond ring on her little ger, he came back, looking like one who had just seen iden death.

'I had forgotten," he said, with a fierceness aimed at nself, "that to-morrow is the Sabbath."

'Need that make any difference?" asked the gypsy.

'At this hour on Monday," said Gavin hoarsely, "I will at the Kaims."

He went away without another word, and Babbie watched n from the window. Nanny had not looked up from ring.

'What a pity he is a minister!" the girl said, reflectively. anny, you are not listening."

The old woman was making the ring flash by the light the fire.

"Nanny, do you hear me? Did you see Mr. Dish come back?"

"I heard the door open," Nanny answered, without tak her greedy eyes off the ring. "Was it him? Whaur did get this, lassie?"

"Give it me back, Nanny, I am going now."

But Nanny did not give it back; she put her other h over it to guard it, and there she crouched, warming l self, not at the fire, but at the ring.

"Give it me, Nanny."

"It winna come off my finger." She gloated over nursed it, kissed it.

"I must have it, Nanny."

The Egyptian put her hand lightly on the old wom shoulder, and Nanny jumped up, pressing the ring to bosom. Her face had become cunning and ugly; she treated into a corner.

"Nanny, give me back my ring or I will take it f you."

The cruel light of the diamond was in Nanny's eyes a moment, and then, shuddering, she said, "Tak your awa, tak it out o' my sicht."

In the meantime Gavin was trudging home gloomily posing his second sermon against women.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONTINUED MISBEHAVIOUR OF THE EGYPTIAN WOMA

By the following Monday it was known at many l that something sat heavily on the Auld Licht minister's On the previous day he had preached his second se of warning to susceptible young men, and his first tion of the word "woman" had blown even the sleepy l upright. Now he had salt fish for breakfast, and on ing the table Jean noticed that his knife and fork uncrossed. He was observed walking into a goosel bush by Susy Linn, who possessed the pioneer sprin of Thrums, and always knew when her man jumped it by suddenly finding herself shot to the ceiling. L the tinsmith, and two women, who had the luck to the street at the time, saw him stopping at Doctor McQ

or, as if about to knock, and then turning smartly ay.

Gavin, indeed, was troubled. He had avoided speaking the Egyptian to his mother. He had gone to McQueen's use to ask the doctor to accompany him to the Kaims, t, with the knocker in his hand, he changed his mind, d now he was at the place of meeting, alone. It was day of thaw, nothing to be heard from a distance but e swish of curling-stones through water on Rashie-bog, ere the match for the eldership was going on. Around n, Gavin saw only dejected firs, with drops of water falling tlessly from them, clods of snow, and grass that rustled as animals were crawling through it. All the roads were ck.

I suppose no young man to whom society has not become cheap thing can be in Gavin's position, awaiting the ming of an attractive girl, without giving thought to what should say to her. When in the pulpit, or visiting the k, words came in a rush to the little minister, but he d to set his teeth to determine what to say to the Egyptian. This was because he had not yet decided which of two men she was. Hardly had he started on one line of ought, when she crossed his vision in a new light, and ew him after her.

Her "Need that make any difference?" sang in his ear e another divit, cast this time at religion itself, and now spoke aloud, pointing his finger at a fir: "I said at e mud house that I believed you because I knew you. To shame be it said that I spoke falsely. How dared you witch me? In your presence I flung away the precious urs in frivolity; I even forgot the Sabbath. For this I ve myself to blame. I am an unworthy preacher of the ord. I sinned far more than you, who have been brought godlessly from your cradle. Nevertheless, whoever you e, I call upon you, before we part, never to meet again, repent of your—"

And then it was no mocker of the Sabbath he was addressing, but a woman with a child's face, and there were rs in her eyes. "Do you care?" she was saying, and ain he answered, "Yes, I care." This girl's name was t Woman, but Babbie.

Now Gavin made a heroic attempt to look upon both se women at once. "Yes, I believe in you," he said to m, "but henceforth you must send your money to Nanny

by another messenger. You are a gypsy and I am minister; and that must part us. I refuse to see you ag I am not angry with you, but as a minister—"

It was not the disappearance of one of the women clipped this argument short; it was Babbie singing:

"It fell on a day, on a bonny summer day,
When the corn grew green and yellow,
That there fell out a great dispute
Between Argyle and Airly.

"The Duke of Montrose has written to Argyle
To come in the morning early,
An' lead in his men by the back o' Dunkeld
To plunder the bonny house o' Airly."

"Where are you?" cried Gavin, in bewilderment.

"I am watching you from my window so high," answ the Egyptian; and then the minister, looking up, saw peering at him from a fir.

"How did you get up there?" he asked, in amazeme

"On my broomstick," Babbie replied, and sang on:

"The lady looked o'er her window sae high,
And oh! but she looked weary,
And there she espied the great Argyle
Come to plunder the bonny house o' Airly."

"What are you doing there?" Gavin said, wrathfu

"This is my home," she answered. "I told you I in a tree."

"Come down at once," ordered Gavin. To whic singer responded:

"'Come down, come down, Lady Margaret,' he sa
'Come down and kiss me fairly,
Or before the morning clear daylight
I'll no leave a standing stane in Airly.'"

"If you do not come down this instant," Gavin sa a rage, "and give me what I was so foolish as to com I—"

The Egyptian broke in:

"'I wouldna kiss thee, great Argyle,
I wouldna kiss thee fairly;
I wouldna kiss thee, great Argyle,
Gin you shouldna leave a standing stane in A

"You have deceived Nanny," Gavin cried, hotly, "and you have brought me here to deride me. I will have no more to do with you."

He walked away quickly, but she called after him, "I am coming down. I have the money," and next moment a snowball hit his hat.

"That is for being cross," she explained, appearing so unexpectedly at his elbow that he was taken aback. "I had to come close up to you before I flung it, or it would have fallen over my shoulder. Why are you so nasty to-day? and, oh, do you know you were speaking to yourself?"

"You are mistaken," said Gavin, severely. "I was speaking to you."

"You didn't see me till I began to sing, did you?"

"Nevertheless I was speaking to you, or rather I was saying to myself what—"

"What you had decided to say to me?" said the delighted gypsy. "Do you prepare your talk like sermons? I hope you have prepared something nice for me. If it is very nice, I may give you this bunch of holly."

She was dressed as he had seen her previously, but for a cluster of holly berries at her breast.

"I don't know that you will think it nice," the minister answered, slowly, "but my duty—"

"If it is about duty," entreated Babbie, "don't say it. Don't, and I will give you the berries."

She took the berries from her dress, smiling triumphantly the while like one who had discovered a cure for duty; and instead of pointing the finger of wrath at her, Gavin stood expectant.

"But no," he said, remembering who he was, and pushing the gift from him, "I will not be bribed. I must tell you—"

"Now," said the Egyptian, sadly, "I see you are angry with me. Is it because I said I lived in a tree? Do forgive me for that dreadful lie."

She had gone on her knees before he could stop her, and was gazing imploringly at him, with her hands clasped.

"You are mocking me again," said Gavin, "but I am not angry with you. Only you must understand—"

She jumped up and put her fingers to her ears.

"You see I can hear nothing," she said.

"Listen while I tell you—"

"I don't hear a word. Why do you scold me when I

have kept my promise? If I dared to take my fingers fr
my ears I would give you the money for Nanny. A
Mr. Dishart, I must be gone in five minutes."

"In five minutes," echoed Gavin, with such a dismal fa
that Babbie heard the words with her eyes, and dropp
her hands.

"Why are you in such haste?" he asked, taking the f
pounds mechanically, and forgetting all that he had me
to say.

"Because they require me at home," she answered, w
a sly glance at her fir. "And, remember, when I
away you must not follow me."

"I won't," said Gavin, so promptly that she was piqu

"Why not?" she asked. "But of course you only ca
here for the money. Well, you have got it. Good-bye."

"You know that was not what I meant," said Ga
stepping after her. "I have told you already that, wh
ever other people say, I trust you. I believe in you, Babb

"Was that what you were saying to the tree?" asked
Egyptian, demurely. Then, perhaps thinking it wisest
to press this point, she continued, irrelevantly, "It se
such a pity that you are a minister."

"A pity to be a minister!" exclaimed Gavin, indignan
"Why, why, you,—why, Babbie, how have you been bro
up?"

"In a curious way," Babbie answered, shortly, "bu
can't tell you about that just now. Would you like
hear all about me?" Suddenly she seemed to have bec
confidential.

"Do you really think me a gypsy?" she asked.

"I have tried not to ask myself that question."

"Why?"

"Because it seems like doubting your word."

"I don't see how you can think of me at all without w
dering who I am."

"No, and so I try not to think of you at all."

"Oh, I don't know that you need do that."

"I have not quite succeeded."

The Egyptian's pique had vanished, but she may
thought that the conversation was becoming dangerous,
she said, abruptly:

"Well, I sometimes think about you."

"Do you?" said Gavin, absurdly gratified. "What do
think about me?"

"I wonder," answered the Egyptian, pleasantly, "which us is the taller."

Gavin's fingers twitched with mortification, and not only fingers but his toes.

"Let us measure," she said, sweetly, putting her back to . "You are not stretching your neck, are you?"

But the minister broke away from her.

"There is one subject," he said, with great dignity, "that llow no one to speak of in my presence, and that is my— height."

His face was as white as his cravat when the surprised yptian next looked at him, and he was panting like one o had run a mile. She was ashamed of herself, and d so.

'It is a topic I would rather not speak about," Gavin swered, dejectedly, "especially to you."

He meant that he would rather be a tall man in her npany than in any other, and possibly she knew this, ugh all she answered was:

'You wanted to know if I am really a gypsy. Well, I "

'An ordinary gypsy?"

'Do you think me ordinary?"

'I wish I knew what to think of you."

'Ah, well, that is my forbidden topic. But we have a od many ideas in common, after all, have we not, though a are only a minis— I mean, though I am only a gypsy?' ere fell between them a silence that gave Babbie time remember she must go.

'I have already stayed too long," she said. "Give my e to Nanny, and say that I am coming to see her soon, haps on Monday. I don't suppose you will be there on nday, Mr. Dishart?"

'I—I cannot say."

'No, you will be too busy. Are you to take the holly ries?"

'I had better not," said Gavin, dolefully.

'Oh, if you don't want them—"

'Give them to me," he said, and as he took them his hand ok.

'I know why you are looking so troubled," said the yptian, archly. "You think I am to ask you the colour my eyes, and you have forgotten again."

He would have answered, but she checked him.

"Make no pretence," she said, severely; "I know think they are blue."

She came close to him until her face almost touched

"Look hard at them," she said, solemnly, "and after you may remember that they are black, black, black!"

At each repetition of the word she shook her head i face. She was adorable. Gavin's arms—but they me nothing. She had run away.

When the little minister had gone, a man came behind a tree and shook his fist in the direction take the gypsy. It was Rob Dow, black with passion.

"It's the Egyptian!" he cried. "You limmer, wha you that hae got haud o' the minister?"

He pursued her, but she vanished as from Gavi Windyghoul.

"A common Egyptian!" he muttered, when he ha give up the search. "But take care, you little devil, called aloud; "take care; if I catch you playing p wi' that man again, I'll wring your neck like a hen's!"

CHAPTER XVII.

CADDAM—LOVE LEADING TO A RUPTURE.

GAVIN told himself not to go near the mud house o following Monday; but he went. The distance is h mile, and the time he took was two hours. Desires per him to halt, as if to argue the matter out, but were tolerant merely because from where he stood he coul Nanny's doorway. When Babbie emerged from it r seems to have made one final effort, for Gavin quickly that side of a tree which is loved of squirrels at the app of an enemy. He looked round the tree-trunk at her then reason discarded him. The gypsy had two empty in her hands. For a second she gazed in the min direction, then demurely leaped the ditch of leaves tha arated Nanny's yard from Caddam, and strolled int wood. Discovering with indignation that he had been ing behind the tree, Gavin came into the open. How g the Egyptian, he reflected, to go to the well for and thus save the old woman's arms! Reason shout near the manse (he only heard the echo) that he

ll make up on it. "Come along," said his desires, and arched him prisoner to the well.

"How curious that we should have met here," Babbie said, her dangerously friendly way, as they filled the pans. "Do ou know I quite started when your shadow fell suddenly n the stone. Did you happen to be passing through the ood?"

"No," answered truthful Gavin, "I was looking for you. thought you saw me from Nanny's door."

"Did you? I only saw a man hiding behind a tree, and course I knew it could not be you."

Gavin looked at her sharply, but she was not laughing at m.

"It was I," he admitted; "but I was not exactly hiding hind the tree."

"You had only stepped behind it for a moment," sug-sted the Egyptian.

Her gravity gave way to laughter under Gavin's sus-cious looks, but the laughing ended abruptly. She had ard a noise in the wood. Gavin heard it, too, and they th turned round in time to see two ragged boys running om them. When boys are very happy they think they must doing wrong, and in a wood, of which they are among e natural inhabitants, they always take flight from the emy, adults, if given time. For my own part, when I e a boy drop from a tree I am as little surprised as if were an apple or a nut. But Gavin was startled, pic-ring these spies handing in the new sensation about him every door, as a district visitor distributes tracts. The psy noted his uneasiness, and resented it.

"What does it feel like to be afraid?" she asked, eyeing m.

"I am afraid of nothing," Gavin answered, offended in rn.

"Yes, you are. When you saw me come out of Nanny's ou crept behind a tree; when these boys showed them-lves you shook. You are afraid of being seen with me. o away, then; I don't want you."

"Fear," said Gavin, "is one thing, and prudence is an-her."

"Another name for it," Babbie interposed.

"Not at all; but I owe it to my position to be careful. nhappily you do not seem to feel—to recognise—to know—"

"To know what?"

"Let us avoid the subject."

"No," the Egyptian said, petulantly. "I hate not to told things. Why must you be 'prudent?'"

"You should see," Gavin replied, awkwardly, "that th is a—a difference between a minister and a gypsy."

"But if I am willing to overlook it?" asked Babbie, pertinently.

Gavin beat the brushwood mournfully with his staff.

"I cannot allow you," he said, "to talk disrespectfully my calling. It is the highest a man can follow. I wish—

He checked himself; but he was wishing she could see in his pulpit.

"I suppose," said the gypsy, reflectively, "one must be v clever to be a minister."

"As for that—" answered Gavin, waving his hand gran

"And it must be nice, too," continued Babbie, "to be to speak for a whole hour to people who can neither ans nor go away. Is it true that before you begin to preach lock the door to keep the congregation in?"

"I must leave you if you talk in that way."

"I only wanted to know."

"Oh, Babbie, I am afraid you have little acquaintance the inside of churches. Do you sit under anybody?"

"Do I sit under anybody?" repeated Babbie, blankly.

Is it any wonder that the minister sighed? "Whom do sit under?" was his form of salutation to strangers.

"I mean, where do you belong?" he said.

"Wanderers," Babbie answered, still misunderstanding "belong to nowhere in particular."

"I am only asking you if you ever go to church?"

"Oh, that is what you mean. Yes, I go often."

"What church?"

"You promised not to ask questions."

"I only mean what denomination do you belong to?"

"Oh, the—the— Is there an English church denom tion?"

Gavin groaned.

"Well, that is my denomination," said Babbie, cheerf "Some day, though, I am coming to hear you preach should like to see how you look in your gown."

"We don't wear gowns."

"What a shame! But I am coming, nevertheless. I to like going to church in Edinburgh."

"You have lived in Edinburgh?"

"We gypsies have lived everywhere," Babbie said, lightly, ough she was annoyed at having mentioned Edinburgh.
"But all gypsies don't speak as you do," said Gavin, zzled again. "I don't understand you."
"Of course you dinna," replied Babbie, in broad Scotch. Maybe, if you did, you would think that it's mair impru- nt in me to stand here cracking clavers wi' the minister an for the minister to waste his time cracking wi' me."
"Then why do it?"
"Because— Oh, because prudence and I always take fferent roads."
"Tell me who you are, Babbie," the minister entreated; "at ast tell me where your encampment is."
"You have warned me against imprudence," she said.
"I want," Gavin continued, earnestly, "to know your people, ur father and mother."
"Why?"
"Because," he answered, stoutly, "I like their daughter."
At that Babbie's fingers played on one of the pans, and, r the moment, there was no more badinage in her.
"You are a good man," she said, abruptly; "but you will ver know my parents."
"Are they dead?"
"They may be; I cannot tell."
"This is all incomprehensible to me."
"I suppose it is. I never asked any one to understand e."
"Perhaps not," said Gavin, excitedly; "but the time has me when I must know everything of you that is to be own."
Babbie receded from him in quick fear.
"You must never speak to me in that way again," she id, in a warning voice.
"In what way?"
Gavin knew what way very well, but he thirsted to hear her words what his own had implied. She did not choose oblige him, however.
"You will never understand me," she said. "I daresay I ight be more like other people now, if—if I had been ought up differently. Not," she added, passionately, "that want to be like others. Do you never feel, when you ve been living a humdrum life for months, that you must eak out of it, or go crazy?"
Her vehemence alarmed Gavin, who hastened to reply:

"My life is not humdrum. It is full of excitement, a
ieties, pleasures, and I am too fond of the pleasures. Perh
it is because I have more of the luxuries of life than
that I am so content with my lot."

"Why, what can you know of luxuries?"

"I have eighty pounds a year."

Babbie laughed. "Are ministers so poor?" she ask
calling back her gravity.

"It is a considerable sum," said Gavin, a little hurt,
it was the first time he had ever heard any one speak
respectfully of eighty pounds.

The Egyptian looked down at her ring, and smiled.

"I shall always remember your saying that," she told h
"after we have quarrelled."

"We shall not quarrel," Gavin said, decidedly.

"Oh, yes, we shall."

"We might have done so once, but we know each other
well now."

"That is why we are to quarrel."

"About what?" said the minister. "I have not bla
you for deriding my stipend, though how it can seem s
in the eyes of a gypsy—"

"Who can afford," broke in Babbie, "to give Nanny se
shillings a week?"

"True," Gavin said, uncomfortably, while the Egyp
again toyed with her ring. She was too impulsive to
reticent except now and then, and suddenly she
"You have looked at this ring before now. Do you k
that if you had it on your finger you would be r
worth robbing than with eighty pounds in each of
pockets?"

"Where did you get it," demanded Gavin, fiercely.

"I am sorry I told you that," the gyspy said, regretfull

"Tell me how you got it?" Gavin insisted, his face
hard.

"Now, you see, we are quarrelling."

"I must know."

"Must know! You forget yourself," she said, haughti

"No, but I have forgotten myself too long. Where
you get that ring?"

"Good afternoon to you," said the Egyptian, lifting
pans.

"It is not good afternoon," he cried, detaining her.
good-bye for ever, unless you answer me."

'As you please," she said. "I will not tell you where I
t my ring. It is no affair of yours."
'Yes, Babbie, it is."
She was not, perhaps, greatly grieved to hear him say so,
r she made no answer.
"You are no gypsy," he continued, suspiciously.
"Perhaps not," she answered, again taking the pans.
"This dress is but a disguise."
"It may be. Why don't you go away and leave me?"
"I am going," he replied, wildly. "I will have no more to
with you. Formerly I pitied you, but—"
He could not have used a word more calculated to rouse
e Egyptian's ire, and she walked away with her head erect.
ıly once did she look back, and it was to say:
"This is prudence—now."

CHAPTER XVIII.

RCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE FIRST SERMON IN APPROVAL OF WOMEN.

A YOUNG man thinks that he alone of mortals is impervious
love, and so the discovery that he is in it suddenly alters
s views of his own mechanism. It is thus not unlike a rap
ı the funny-bone. Did Gavin make this discovery when the
gyptian left him? Apparently he only came to the brink
it and stood blind. He had driven her from him for ever,
ıd his sense of loss was so acute that his soul cried out for
.e cure rather than for the name of the malady.
In time he would have realised what had happened, but
me was denied him, for just as he was starting for the
ud house Babbie saved his dignity by returning to him. It
as not her custom to fix her eyes on the ground as she
alked, but she was doing so now, and at the same time
winging the empty pans. Doubtless she had come back for
ıore water, in the belief that Gavin had gone. He pro-
ounced her name with a sense of guilt, and she looked up
ırprised, or seemingly surprised, to find him still there.
"I thought you had gone away long ago," she said, stiffly.
"Otherwise," asked Gavin, the dejected, "you would not
ave come back to the well?"
"Certainly not."

"I am very sorry. Had you waited another momen
should have been gone."

This was said in apology, but the wilful Egyptian chose
change its meaning.

"You have no right to blame me for disturbing you,"
declared, with warmth.

"I did not. I only—"

"You could have been a mile away by this time. Na
wanted more water."

Babbie scrutinised the minister sharply as she made
statement. Surely her conscience troubled her, for on
not answering immediately she said, "Do you presume to
believe me? What could have made me return except to
the pans again?"

"Nothing," Gavin admitted, eagerly, "and I assure you
Babbie should have been grateful to his denseness, bu
merely set her mind at rest.

"Say anything against me you choose," she told him. "
it as brutally as you like, for I won't listen."

She stopped to hear his response to that, and she loo
so cold that it almost froze on Gavin's lips.

"I had no right," he said, dolefully, "to speak to yo
I did."

"You had not," answered the proud Egyptian. She
looking away from him to show that his repentance was
even interesting to her. However, she had forgotten alr
not to listen.

"What business is it of mine?" asked Gavin, amaze
his late presumption, "whether you are a gypsy or no?"

"None whatever."

"And as for the ring—"

Here he gave her an opportunity of allowing tha
curiosity about the ring was warranted. She decline
help him, however, and so he had to go on.

"The ring is yours," he said, "and why should you
wear it?"

"Why, indeed?"

"I am afraid I have a very bad temper."

He paused for a contradiction, but she nodded her
in agreement.

"And it is no wonder," he continued, "that you thin
a—a brute."

"I'm sure it is not."

"But, Babbie, I want you to know that I despise myse

y base suspicions. No sooner did I see them than I loathed iem and myself for harbouring them. Despite this mystery, look upon you as a noble-hearted girl. I shall always think f you so."

This time Babbie did not reply.

"That was all I had to say," concluded Gavin, "except that hope you will not punish Nanny for my sins. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said the Egyptian, who was looking at the ell.

The minister's legs could not have heard him give the order march, for they stood waiting.

"I thought," said the Egyptian, after a moment, "that ou said you were going."

"I was only—brushing my hat," Gavin answered with dig- ty. "You want me to go?"

She bowed, and this time he did set off.

"You can go if you like," she remarked now.

He turned at this.

"But you said—" he began, diffidently.

"No, I did not," she answered, with indignation.

He could see her face at last.

"You—you are crying!" he exclaimed, in bewilderment.

"Because you are so unfeeling," sobbed Babbie.

"What have I said, what have I done?" cried Gavin, in agony of self-contempt. "Oh, that I had gone away at ice!"

"That is cruel."

"What is?"

"To say that."

"What did I say?"

"That you wished you had gone away."

"But surely," the minister faltered, "you asked me to ."

"How can you say so?" asked the gypsy, reproachfully.

Gavin was distracted. "On my word," he said, earnestly, thought you did. And now I have made you unhappy. abbie, I wish I were anybody but myself; I am a hopeless ut."

"Now you are unjust," said Babbie, hiding her face.

"Again? To you?"

"No, you stupid," she said, beaming on him in her most lightful manner, "to yourself!"

She gave him both her hands impetuously, and he did t let them go until she added:

"I am so glad that you are reasonable at last. Men a so much more unreasonable than women, don't you think?"

"Perhaps we are," Gavin said, diplomatically.

"Of course you are. Why, every one knows that. W I forgive you; only remember, you have admitted that was all your fault?"

She was pointing her finger at him like a schoolmistre and Gavin hastened to answer:

"You were not to blame at all."

"I like to hear you say that," explained the representat of the more reasonable sex, "because it was really all fault."

"No, no."

"Yes, it was; but of course I could not say so until y had asked my pardon. You must understand that?"

The representative of the less reasonable sex could understand it, but he agreed recklessly, and it seemed plain to the woman that she continued, confidentially:

"I pretended that I did not want to make it up, but I di

"Did you?" asked Gavin, elated.

"Yes, but nothing could have induced me to make the f advance. You see why?"

"Because I was so unreasonable?" asked Gavin, doubtfu

"Yes, and nasty. You admit you were nasty?"

"Undoubtedly, I have an evil temper. It has brought to shame many times."

"Oh, I don't know," said the Egyptian, charitably. "I it. I believe I admire bullies."

"Did I bully you?"

"I never knew such a bully. You quite frightened n

Gavin began to be less displeased with himself.

"You are sure," inquired Babbie, "that you had no r to question me about the ring?"

"Certain," answered Gavin.

"Then I will tell you all about it," said Babbie, "for natural that you should want to know."

He looked eagerly at her, and she had become serious sad.

"I must tell you at the same time," she said, "who I and then—then we shall never see each other any more

"Why should you tell me?" cried Gavin, his hand ri to stop her.

"Because you have a right to know," she replied, now much in earnest to see that she was yielding a point.

ould prefer not to tell you: yet there is nothing wrong in y secret, and it may make you think of me kindly when I ve gone away."

"Don't speak in that way, Babbie, after you have forven me."

"Did I hurt you? It was only because I know that you nnot trust me while I remain a mystery. I know you would y to trust me, but doubts would cross your mind. Yes, they ould; they are the shadows that mysteries cast. Who can elieve a gypsy if the odds are against her?"

"I can," said Gavin; but she shook her head, and so would e had he remembered three recent sermons of his own eaching.

"I had better tell you all," she said, with an effort.

"It is my turn now to refuse to listen to you," exclaimed avin, who was only a chivalrous boy. "Babbie, I should like hear your story, but until you want to tell it to me I will ot listen to it. I have faith in your honour, and that is fficient."

It was boyish, but I am glad Gavin said it; and now Babbie mired something in him that deserved admiration. His ith, no doubt, made her a better woman.

"I admit that I would rather tell you nothing just now," e said, gratefully. "You are sure you will never say gain that you don't understand me?"

"Quite sure," said Gavin, bravely. "And by and by you ill offer to tell me of your free will?"

"Oh, don't let us think of the future," answered Babbie. Let us be happy for the moment."

This had been the Egyptian's philosophy always, but it as ill-suited for Auld Licht ministers, as one of them was esently to discover.

"I want to make one confession, though," Babbie conued, almost reluctantly. "When you were so nasty a little hile ago, I didn't go back to Nanny's. I stood watching you om behind a tree, and then, for an excuse to come back, —I poured out the water. Yes, and I told you another lie. really came back to admit that it was all my fault, if I could ot get you to say that it was yours. I am so glad you gave first."

She was very near him, and the tears had not yet dried her eyes. They were laughing eyes, eyes in distress, imoring eyes. Her pale face, smiling, sad, dimpled, yet enating forgiveness, was the one prominent thing in the

world to him just then. He wanted to kiss her. He wo
have done it as soon as her eyes rested on his, but she co
tinued, without regarding him:

"How mean that sounds! Oh, if I were a man I sho
wish to be everything that I am not, and nothing that I a
I should scorn to be a liar, I should choose to be open in
things, I should try to fight the world honestly. But I am o
a woman, and so—well, that is the kind of man I should l
to marry."

"A minister may be all these things," said Gavin, brea
lessly.

"The man I could love," Babbie went on, not heed
him, almost forgetting that he was there, "must not sp
his days in idleness as the men I know do."

"I do not."

"He must be brave, no mere worker among others, bu
leader of men."

"All ministers are."

"Who makes his influence felt."

"Assuredly."

"And takes the side of the weak against the strong, e
though the strong be in the right."

"Always my tendency."

"A man who has a mind of his own, and having
made it up stands to it in defiance even of—"

"Of his session."

"Of the world. He must understand me."

"I do."

"And be my master."

"It is his lawful position in the house."

"He must not yield to my coaxing or tempers."

"It would be weakness."

"But compel me to do his bidding; yes, even thrash
if—"

"If you won't listen to reason. Babbie," cried Gavi
am that man!"

Here the inventory abruptly ended, and these two pe
found themselves staring at each other, as if of a su
they had heard something dreadful. I do not know how
they stood thus, motionless and horrified. I cannot tell
which stirred first. All I know is that almost simultane
they turned from each other and hurried out of the
in opposite directions.

CHAPTER XIX.

END OF THE STATE OF INDECISION.

Long before I had any thought of writing this story, I d told it so often to my little maid that she now knows me of it better than I. If you saw me looking up from r paper to ask her, "What was it that Birse said to Jean out the minister's flowers?" or, "Where was Hendry Munn lden on the night of the riots?" and heard her confident swers, you would conclude that she had been in the thick these events, instead of born many years after them. I ntion this now because I have reached a point where her mory contradicts mine. She maintains that Rob Dow was d of the meeting in the wood by the two boys whom it turbed, while my own impression is that he was a witss of it. If she is right, Rob must have succeeded in ghtening the boys into telling no other person, for rtainly the scandal did not spread in Thrums. After , however, it is only important to know that Rob did rn of the meeting. Its first effect was to send him sully to the drink.

Many a time since these events have I pictured what might ve been their upshot had Dow confided their discovery me. Had I suspected why Rob was grown so dour again, vin's future might have been very different. I was meetg Rob now and again in the glen, asking, with an affected relessness he did not bottom, for news of the little miner, but what he told me was only the gossip of the wn; and what I should have known, that Thrums might ver know it, he kept to himself. I suppose he feared to eak to Gavin, who made several efforts to reclaim him, t without avail.

Yet Rob's heart opened for a moment to one man, or her was forced open by that man. A few days after the eting at the well, Rob was bringing the smell of whisky th him down Banker's Close when he ran against a famous ff, with which the doctor pinned him to the wall.

"Ay," said the outspoken doctor, looking contemptuously o Rob's bleary eyes, "so this is what your conversion ounts to? Faugh! Rob Dow, if you were half a man the ry thought of what Mr. Dishart has done for you would ke you run past the public-houses."

"It's the thocht o' him that sends me running to them," growled Rob, knocking down the staff. "Let me alane."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded McQueen, hooking him this time.

"Speir at himsel'; speir at the woman."

"What woman?"

"Take your staff out o' my neck."

"Not till you tell me why you, of all people, are speaking against the minister."

Torn by a desire for a confidant and loyalty to Gavin, Rob was already in a fury.

"Say again," he burst forth, "that I was speaking agin the minister and I'll practise on you what I'm awid to do to her."

"Who is she?"

"Wha's wha?"

"The woman whom the minister—"

"I said nothing about a woman," said poor Rob, alarmed for Gavin. "Doctor, I'm ready to swear afore a bailie that I never saw them thegither at the Kaims."

"The Kaims!" exclaimed the doctor, suddenly enlightened. "Pooh! you only mean the Egyptian. Rob, make your mind easy about this. I know why he met her there."

"Do you ken that she has bewitched him; do you ken I saw him trying to put his arms round her; do you ken they have a trysting-place in Caddam wood?"

This came from Rob in a rush, and he would fain have called it all back.

"I'm drunk, doctor, roaring drunk," he said, hastily, "and it wasna the minister I saw ava; it was another man."

Nothing more could the doctor draw from Rob, but he had heard sufficient to smoke some pipes on. Like many who pride themselves on being recluses, McQueen loved the gossip that came to him uninvited; indeed, he opened his mouth to it as greedily as any man in Thrums. He respected Gavin, however, too much to find this new dish palatable, and so his researches to discover whether other Auld Lichts shared Rob's fears were conducted with caution. "Is there no word of your minister's getting a wife yet?" he asked several, but only got for answers, "There's word o' a Glasgow leddy's sending him baskets o' flowers," or "He has his een open, but he's taking his time; ay, he's looking for the blade o' corn in the stack o' chaff."

This convinced McQueen that the congregation knew noth-

ing of the Egyptian, but it did not satisfy him, and he made an opportunity of inviting Gavin into the surgery. It was, to the doctor, the cosiest nook in his house, but to me and many others a room that smelled of hearses. On the top of the pipes and tobacco tins that littered the table there usually lay a death certificate, placed there deliberately by the doctor to scare his sister, who had a passion for putting the surgery to rights.

"By the way," McQueen said, after he and Gavin had talked a little while, "did I ever advise you to smoke?"

"It is your usual form of salutation," Gavin answered, laughing. "But I don't think you ever supplied me with a reason."

"I daresay not. I am too experienced a doctor to cheapen my prescriptions in that way. However, here is one good reason. I have noticed, sir, that at your age a man is either a slave to a pipe or to a woman. Do you want me to lend you a pipe now?"

"Then I am to understand," asked Gavin, slyly, "that your locket came into your possession in your pre-smoking days, and that you merely wear it from habit?"

"Tuts!" answered the doctor, buttoning his coat. "I told you there was nothing in the locket. If there is, I have forgotten what it is."

"You are a hopeless old bachelor, I see," said Gavin, unaware that the doctor was probing him. He was surprised next moment to find McQueen in the ecstasies of one who has won a rubber.

"Now, then," cried the jubilant doctor, "as you have confessed so much, tell me all about her. Name and address, please."

"Confess! What have I confessed?"

"It won't do, Mr. Dishart, for even your face betrays you. No, no, I am an old bird, but I have not forgotten the ways of the fledgelings. 'Hopeless bachelor,' sir, is a sweetmeat in every young man's mouth until of a sudden he finds it sour, and that means the banns. When is it to be?"

"We must find the lady first," said the minister, uncomfortably.

"You tell me, in spite of that face, that you have not fixed on her?"

"The difficulty, I suppose, would be to persuade her to fix on me."

"Not a bit of it. But you admit there is some one?"

"Who would have me?"

"You are wriggling out of it. Is it the banker's daug ter?"

"No," Gavin cried.

"I hear you have walked up the back wynd with her thr times this week. The town is in a ferment about it."

"She is a great deal in the back wynd."

"Fiddle-de-dee! I am oftener in the back wynd th you, and I never meet her there."

"That is curious."

"No, it isn't, but never mind. Perhaps you have fall to Miss Pennycuick's piano? Did you hear it going as passed the house?"

"She seems always to be playing on her piano."

"Not she; but you are supposed to be musical, and when she sees you from her window she begins to thur If I am in the school wynd and hear the piano going know you will turn the corner immediately. However, I glad to hear it is not Miss Pennycuick. Then it is the fac at the Spittal's lassie? Well done, sir. You should arra to have the wedding at the same time as the old earl's, wh comes off in summer, I believe."

"One foolish marriage is enough in a day, doctor."

"Eh? You call him a fool for marrying a young wi Well, no doubt he is, but he would have been a bigger f to marry an old one. However, it is not Lord Rintoul we discussing, but Gavin Dishart. I suppose you know t the factor's lassie is an heiress?"

"And, therefore, would scorn me."

"Try her," said the doctor, drily. "Her father and mot as I know, married on a ten-pound note. But if I am wr again, I must adopt the popular view in Thrums. It i Glasgow lady, after all? Man, you needn't look indign at hearing that the people are discussing your intended. can no more stop it than a doctor's orders could keep L Tammas out of church. They have discovered that she se you flowers twice every week."

"They never reach me," answered Gavin, then remembe the holly and winced.

"Some," persisted the relentless doctor, "even speak of y having been seen together; but of course, if she is a G gow lady, that is a mistake."

"Where did they see us?" asked Gavin, with a suc trouble in his throat.

You are shaking," said the doctor, keenly, "like a medical dent at his first operation. But as for the story that and the lady have been seen together, I can guess how rose. Do you remember that gypsy girl?"

The doctor had begun by addressing the fire, but he suddly wheeled round and fired his question in the minister's e. Gavin, however, did not even blink.

'Why should I have forgotten her?" he replied, coolly.

'Oh, in the stress of other occupations. But it was your ting the money from her at the Kaims for Nanny that I s to speak of. Absurd though it seems, I think some ard must have seen you and her at the Kaims, and mis- en her for the lady."

McQueen flung himself back in his chair to enjoy this e.

'Fancy mistaking that woman for a lady!" he said to vin, who had not laughed with him.

'I think Nanny has some justification for considering her ady," the minister said, firmly.

'Well, I grant that. But what made me guffaw was a ion of the harum-scarum, devil-may-care little Egyptian stress of an Auld Licht manse!"

'She is neither harum-scarum nor devil-may-care," Gavin swered, without heat, for he was no longer a distracted nister. "You don't understand her as I do."

'No, I seem to understand her differently."

'What do you know of her?"

'That is just it," said the doctor, irritated by Gavin's olness. "I know she saved Nanny from the poorhouse, but don't know where she got the money. I know she can k fine English when she chooses, but I don't know where learned it. I know she heard that the soldiers were ning to Thrums before they knew of their destination mselves, but I don't know who told her. You who under- nd her can doubtless explain these matters?"

'She offered to explain them to me," Gavin answered, still moved, "but I forbade her."

"Why?"

'It is no business of yours, doctor. Forgive me for say- so."

'In Thrums," replied McQueen, "a minister's business is erybody's business. I have often wondered who helped her escape from the soldiers that night. Did she offer to plain that to you?"

"She did not."

"Perhaps," said the doctor, sharply, "because it was unnecessary?"

"That was the reason."

"You helped her to escape?"

"I did."

"And you are not ashamed of it?"

"I am not."

"Why were you so anxious to screen her?"

"She saved some of my people from gaol."

"Which was more than they deserved."

"I have always understood that you concealed two of them in your own stable."

"Maybe I did," the doctor had to allow. "But I took my stick to them next morning. Besides, they were Thrums folks, while you had never set eyes on that imp of mischief before."

"I cannot sit here, doctor, and hear her called names," Gavin said, rising, but McQueen gripped him by the shoulder.

"For pity's sake, sir, don't let us wrangle like a pair of women. I brought you here to speak my mind to you, and speak it I will. I warn you, Mr. Dishart, that you are being watched. You have been seen meeting this lassie in Caddam as well as at the Kaims."

"Let the whole town watch, doctor. I have met her openly."

"And why? Oh, don't make Nanny your excuse."

"I won't. I met her because I love her."

"Are you mad?" cried McQueen. "You speak as if you would marry her."

"Yes," replied Gavin, determinedly, "and I mean to do it."

The doctor flung up his hands.

"I give you up," he said, raging. "I give you up. Think of your congregation, man."

"I have been thinking of them, and as soon as I have a right to do so, I shall tell them what I have told you."

"And until you tell them I will keep your madness to myself, for I warn you that, as soon as they do know, there will be a vacancy in the Auld Licht kirk of Thrums."

"She is a woman," said Gavin, hesitating, though preparing to go, "of whom any minister might be proud."

"She is a woman," the doctor roared, "that no congregation would stand. Oh, if you will go, there is your hat."

Perhaps Gavin's face was whiter as he left the house

than when he entered it, but there was no other change. Those who were watching him decided that he was looking much as usual, except that his mouth was shut very firm, from which they concluded that he had been taking the doctor to task for smoking. They also noted that he returned to McQueen's house within half an hour after leaving it, but remained no time.

Some explained this second visit by saying that the minister had forgotten his cravat, and had gone back for it. What really sent him back, however, was his conscience. He had said to McQueen that he helped Babbie to escape from the soldiers because of her kindness to his people, and he returned to own that it was a lie.

Gavin knocked at the door of the surgery, but entered without waiting for a response. McQueen was no longer stamping through the room, red and furious. He had even laid aside his pipe. He was sitting back in his chair, looking half mournfully, half contemptuously, at something in his palm. His hand closed instinctively when he heard the door open, but Gavin had seen that the object was an open locket.

"It was only your reference to the thing," the detected doctor said, with a grim laugh, "that made me open it. Forty year ago, sir, I— Phew! it is forty-two years, and I have not got over it yet." He closed the locket with a snap. "I hope you have come back, Dishart, to speak more rationally?"

Gavin told him why he had come back, and the doctor said he was a fool for his pains.

"It is useless, Dishart, to make another appeal to you?"

"Quite useless, doctor," Gavin answered, promptly. "My mind is made up at last."

CHAPTER XX.

NIGHT—MARGARET—FLASHING OF A LANTERN.

THAT evening the little minister sat silently in his parlour. Darkness came, and with it weavers rose heavy-eyed from their looms, sleepy children sought their mothers, and the gate of the field above the manse fell forward to let cows pass to their byre; the great Bible was produced in many homes, and the ten o'clock bell clanged its last word to the night. Margaret had allowed the lamp to burn low.

Thinking that her boy slept, she moved softly to his side and spread her shawl over his knees. He had forgotten her. The doctor's warnings scarcely troubled him. He was Babbie's lover. The mystery of her was only a veil hiding her from other men, and he was looking through it upon the face of his beloved.

It was a night of long ago, but can you not see my dear Margaret still as she bends over her son? Not twice in many days dared the minister snatch a moment's sleep from gray morning to midnight, and, when this did happen, he jumped up by and by in shame, to revile himself for an idler, and ask his mother wrathfully why she had not tumbled him out of his chair. To-night Margaret was divided between a desire to let him sleep and a fear of his self-reproach when he awoke; and so, perhaps, the tear fell that roused him.

"I did not like to waken you," Margaret said, apprehensively. "You must have been very tired, Gavin?"

"I was not sleeping, mother," he said, slowly. "I was only thinking."

"Ah, Gavin, you never rise from your loom. It is hardly fair that your hands should be so full of other people's troubles."

"They only fill one hand, mother; I carry the people's joys in the other hand, and that keeps me erect, like a woman between her pan and pitcher. I think the joys have outweighed the sorrows since we came here."

"It has been all joy to me, Gavin, for you never tell me of the sorrows. An old woman has no right to be so happy."

"Old woman, mother!" said Gavin. But his indignation was vain. Margaret was an old woman. I made her old before her time.

"As for these terrible troubles," he went on, "I forget them the moment I enter the garden and see you at your window. And, maybe, I keep some of the joys from you as well as the troubles."

Words about Babbie leaped to his mouth, but with an effort he restrained them. He must not tell his mother of her until Babbie of her free will had told him all there was to tell.

"I have been a selfish woman, Gavin."

"You selfish, mother!" Gavin said, smiling. "Tell me when you did not think of others before yourself?"

"Always, Gavin. Has it not been selfishness to hope that

you would never want to bring another mistress to the manse? Do you remember how angry you used to be in Glasgow when I said that you would marry some day?"

"I remember," Gavin said, sadly.

"Yes; you used to say, 'Don't speak of such a thing, mother, for the horrid thought of it is enough to drive all the Hebrew out of my head.' Was not that lightning just now?"

"I did not see it. What a memory you have, mother, for all the boyish things I said."

"I can't deny," Margaret admitted, with a sigh, "that I liked to hear you speak in that way, though I knew you would go back on your word. You see, you have changed already."

"How, mother?" asked Gavin, surprised.

"You said just now that those were boyish speeches. Gavin, I can't understand the mothers who are glad to see their sons married; though I had a dozen I believe it would be a wrench to lose one of them."

"There are not many mothers like you," Gavin said, laying his hand fondly on Margaret's shoulder.

"There are many better mothers, but few such sons. It is easily seen why God could not afford me another. Gavin, I am sure that was lightning."

"I think it was; but don't be alarmed, mother."

"I am never frightened when you are with me."

"And I always will be with you."

"Ah, if you were married—"

"Do you think," asked Gavin, indignantly, "that it would make any difference to you?"

Margaret did not answer. She knew what a difference it would make.

"Except," continued Gavin, with a man's obtuseness, "that you would have a daughter as well as a son to love you and take care of you?"

Margaret could have told him that men give themselves away needlessly who marry for the sake of their mother, but all she said was:

"Gavin, I see you can speak more composedly of marrying now than you spoke a year ago. If I did not know better, I should think a Thrums young lady had got hold of you."

It was a moment before Gavin replied; then he said, gaily:

"Really, mother, the way the best of women speak of

each other is lamentable. You say I should be better married, and then you take for granted that every marriageable woman in the neighbourhood is trying to kidnap me. I am sure you did not take my father by force in that way."

He did not see that Margaret trembled at the mention of his father. He never knew that she was many times pining to lay her head upon his breast and tell him of me. Yet I cannot but believe that she always shook when Adam Dishart was spoken of between them. I cannot think that the long cherishing of the secret which was hers and mine kept her face steady when that horror suddenly confronted her as now. Gavin would have suspected much had he ever suspected anything.

"I know," Margaret said, courageously, "that you would be better married; but when it comes to selecting the woman I grow fearful. O Gavin!" she said, earnestly, "it is an awful thing to marry the wrong man!"

Here in a moment had she revealed much, though far from all, and there must have been many such moments between them. But Gavin was thinking of his own affairs.

"You mean the wrong woman, don't you, mother?" he said, and she hastened to agree. But it was the wrong man she meant.

"The difficulty, I suppose, is to hit upon the right one?" Gavin said, blithely.

"To know which is the right one in time," answered Margaret, solemnly. "But I am saying nothing against the young ladies of Thrums, Gavin. Though I have scarcely seen them, I know there are good women among them. Jean says—"

"I believe, mother," Gavin interposed, reproachfully, "that you have been questioning Jean about them?"

"Just because I was afraid—I mean because I fancied—you might be taking a liking to one of them."

"And what is Jean's verdict?"

"She says every one of them would jump at you, like a bird at a berry."

"But the berry cannot be divided. How would Miss Pennycuick please you, mother?"

"Gavin!" cried Margaret, in consternation, "you don't mean to— But you are laughing at me again."

"Then there is the banker's daughter?"

"I can't thole her."

"Why, I question if you ever set eyes on her, mother."

"Perhaps not, Gavin; but I have suspected her ever since she offered to become one of your tract distributors."

"I have thought," Margaret went on, "that there was a great deal of wisdom in what you said at that last marriage in the manse, the one where, you remember, the best man and the bridesmaid joined hands instead of the bride and bridegroom."

"What did I say?" asked the little minister, with misgivings.

"That there was great danger when people married out of their own rank of life."

"Oh—ah—well, of course, that would depend on circumstances."

"They were wise words, Gavin. There was the sermon, too, that you preached a month or two ago against marrying into other denominations. Jean told me that it greatly impressed the congregation. It is a sad sight, as you said, to see an Auld Licht lassie changing her faith because her man belongs to the U. P.'s."

"Did I say that?"

"You did, and it so struck Jean that she told me she would rather be an old maid for life, 'the which,' she said, 'is a dismal prospect,' than marry out of the Auld Licht kirk."

"Perhaps that was a rather narrow view I took, mother. After all, the fitting thing is that the wife should go with her husband; especially if it is he that is the Auld Licht."

"I don't hold with narrowness myself, Gavin," Margaret said, with an effort, "and admit that there are many respectable persons in the other denominations. But though a weaver might take a wife from another kirk without much scandal, an Auld Licht minister's madam must be Auld Licht born and bred. The congregation would expect no less. I doubt if they would be sure of her if she came from some other Auld Licht kirk. 'Deed, though she came from our own kirk, I'm thinking the session would want to catechise her. Ay, and if all you tell me of Lang Tammas be true (for, as you know, I never spoke to him), I warrant he would catechise the session."

"I would brook no interference from my session," said Gavin, knitting his brows, "and I do not consider it necessary that a minister's wife should have been brought up in his denomination. Of course she would join it. We must

make allowance, mother, for the thousands of young wom who live in places where there is no Auld Licht kirk."

"You can pity them, Gavin," said Margaret, "witho marrying them. A minister has his congregation to think o

"So the doctor says," interposed her son.

"Then it was just like his presumption!" cried Margar "A minister should marry to please himself."

"Decidedly he should," Gavin agreed, eagerly, "and t bounden duty of the congregation is to respect and hono his choice. If they forget that duty, his is to remind the of it."

"Ah, well, Gavin," said Margaret, confidently, "your cc gregation are so fond of you that your choice would doul less be theirs. Jean tells me that even Lang Tammas, thou he is so obstinate, has a love for you passing the love woman. These were her words. Jean is more sentimen than you might think."

"I wish he would show his love," said Gavin, "by cc tradicting me less frequently."

"You have Rob Dow to weigh against him."

"No; I cannot make out what has come over Rob late He is drinking heavily again, and avoiding me. The lig ning is becoming very vivid."

"Yes, and I hear no thunder. There is another thi Gavin. I am one of those that like to sit at home, but you had a wife she would visit the congregation. A tr religious wife would be a great help to you."

"Religious," Gavin repeated, slowly. "Yes, but some p ple are religious without speaking of it. If a woman good she is religious. A good woman who has been, us say, foolishly brought up, only needs to be shown right way to tread it. Mother, I question if any m minister or layman, ever yet fell in love because the wo was thrifty, or clever, or went to church twice on S bath."

"I believe that is true," Margaret said, "and I would have it otherwise. But it is an awful thing, Gavin, as said from the pulpit two weeks ago, to worship only a beautiful face."

"You think too much about what I say in the pul mother," Gavin said, with a sigh, "though of course a m who fell in love merely with a face would be a contempt creature. Yet I see that women do not understand h beauty affects a man."

"Yes, yes, my boy,—oh, indeed, they do," said Margaret, who on some matters knew far more than her son.

Twelve o'clock struck, and she rose to go to bed, alarmed lest she should not waken early in the morning. "But I am afraid I sha'n't sleep," she said, "if that lightning continues."

"It is harmless," Gavin answered, going to the window. He started back next moment, and crying, "Don't look out, mother," hastily pulled down the blind.

"Why, Gavin," Margaret said, in fear, "you look as if it had struck you."

"Oh, no," Gavin answered, with a forced laugh, and he lit her lamp for her.

But it had struck him, though it was not lightning. It was the flashing of a lantern against the window to attract his attention, and the holder of the lantern was Babbie.

"Good-night, mother."

"Good-night, Gavin. Don't sit up any later."

CHAPTER XXI.

LOVERS.

ONLY something terrible, Gavin thought, could have brought Babbie to him at such an hour; yet when he left his mother's room it was to stand motionless on the stair, waiting for a silence in the manse that would not come. A house is never still in darkness to those who listen intently; there is a whispering in distant chambers, an unearthly hand presses the snib of the window, the latch rises. Ghosts were created when the first man woke in the night.

Now Margaret slept. Two hours earlier, Jean, sitting on the salt-bucket, had read the chapter with which she always sent herself to bed. In honour of the little minister she had begun her Bible afresh when he came to Thrums, and was progressing through it, a chapter at night, sighing, perhaps, on washing-days, at a long chapter, such as Exodus twelfth, but never making two of it. The kitchen wag-at-the-wall clock was telling every room in the house that she had neglected to shut her door. As Gavin felt his way down the dark stair, awakening it into protest at every step, he had a glimpse of the pendulum's shadow running back and

forward on the hearth; he started back from another shadow on the lobby wall, and then seeing it start, too, knew it for his own. He opened the door and passed out unobserved; it was as if the sounds and shadows that filled the manse were too occupied with their game to mind an interloper.

"Is that you?" he said to a bush, for the garden was in semi-darkness. Then the lantern's flash met him, and he saw the Egyptian in the summer-seat.

"At last!" she said, reproachfully. "Evidently a lantern is a poor door-bell."

"What is it?" Gavin asked, in suppressed excitement, for the least he expected to hear was that she was again being pursued for her share in the riot. The tremor in his voice surprised her into silence, and he thought she faltered because what she had to tell him was so woful. So, in the darkness of the summer-seat, he kissed her, and she might have known that with that kiss the little minister was hers for ever.

Now Babbie had been kissed before, but never thus, and she turned from Gavin, and would have liked to be alone for she had begun to know what love was, and the flash that revealed it to her laid bare her own shame, so that her impulse was to hide herself from her lover. But of all this Gavin was unconscious, and he repeated his question. The lantern was swaying in her hand, and when she turned fearfully to him its light fell on his face, and she saw how alarmed he was.

"I am going away back to Nanny's," she said, suddenly, and rose cowed, but he took her hand and held her.

"Babbie," he said, huskily, "tell me what has happened to bring you here at this hour."

She sought to pull her hand from him, but could not.

"How you are trembling!" he whispered. "Babbie," he cried, "something terrible has happened to you, but do not fear. Tell me what it is, and then,—then I will take you to my mother: yes, I will take you now."

The Egyptian would have given all she had in the world to be able to fly from him then, that he might never know her as she was, but it could not be, and so she spoke on remorselessly. If her voice had become hard, it was a new-born scorn of herself that made it so.

"You are needlessly alarmed," she said; "I am not at all the kind of person who deserves sympathy or expects it. There is nothing wrong. I am staying with Nanny of

night, and only came to Thrums to amuse myself. I chased your policeman down the Roods with my lantern, and then came here to amuse myself with you. That is all."

"It was nothing but a love of mischief that brought you here?" Gavin asked, sternly, after an unpleasant pause.

"Nothing," the Egyptian answered, recklessly.

"I could not have believed this of you," the minister said; "I am ashamed of you."

"I thought," Babbie retorted, trying to speak lightly until she could get away from him, "that you would be glad to see me. Your last words in Caddam seemed to justify that idea."

"I am very sorry to see you," he answered, reproachfully.

"Then I will go away at once," she said, stepping out of the summer-seat.

"Yes," he replied, "you must go at once."

"Then I won't," she said, turning back defiantly. "I know what you are to say: that the Thrums people would be shocked if they knew I was here; as if I cared what the Thrums people think of me."

"I care what they think of you." Gavin said, as if that were decisive, "and I tell you I will not allow you to repeat this freak."

"You 'will not allow me,'" echoed Babbie, almost enjoying herself, despite her sudden loss of self-respect.

"I will not," Gavin said, resolutely. "Henceforth you must do as I think fit."

"Since when have you taken command of me?" demanded Babbie.

"Since a minute ago," Gavin replied, "when you let me kiss you."

"Let you!" exclaimed Babbie, now justly incensed. "You did it yourself. I was very angry."

"No, you were not."

"I am not allowed to say that even?" asked the Egyptian. "Tell me something I may say, then, and I will repeat it after you."

"I have something to say to you," Gavin told her, after a moment's reflection; "yes, and there is something I should like to hear you repeat after me, but not to-night."

"I don't want to hear what it is," Babbie said, quickly, but she knew what it was, and even then, despite the new pain at her heart, her bosom swelled with pride because this man still loved her. Now she wanted to run away with his lov-

for her before he could take it from her, and then realising that this parting must be for ever, a great desire filled her to hear him put that kiss into words, and she said, faltering:

"You can tell me what it is if you like."

"Not to-night," said Gavin.

"To-night, if at all," the gypsy almost entreated.

"To-morrow, at Nanny's," answered Gavin, decisively; and this time he remembered without dismay that the morrow was the Sabbath.

In the fairy tale the beast suddenly drops his skin and is a prince, and I believe it seemed to Babbie that some such change had come over this man, her plaything.

"Your lantern is shining on my mother's window," were the words that woke her from this discovery, and then she found herself yielding the lantern to him. She became conscious vaguely that a corresponding change was taking place in herself.

"You spoke of taking me to your mother," she said, bitterly.

"Yes," he answered at once, "to-morrow;" but she shook her head, knowing that to-morrow he would be wiser.

"Give me the lantern," she said, in a low voice, "I am going back to Nanny's now."

"Yes," he said, "we must set out now, but I can carry the lantern."

"You are not coming with me!" she exclaimed, shaking herself free of his hand.

"I am coming," he replied, calmly, though he was not calm. "Take my arm, Babbie."

She made a last effort to free herself from bondage, crying passionately, "I will not let you come."

"When I say I am coming," Gavin answered between his teeth, "I mean that I am coming, and so let that be an end of this folly. Take my arm."

"I think I hate you," she said, retreating from him.

"Take my arm," he repeated, and, though her breast was rising rebelliously, she did as he ordered, and so he escorted her from the garden. At the foot of the field she stopped, and thought to frighten him by saying, "What would the people say if they saw you with me now?"

"It does not much matter what they would say," he answered, still keeping his teeth together as if doubtful of their courage. "As for what they would do, that is certain; they would put me out of my church."

"And it is dear to you?"

"Dearer than life."

"You told me long ago that your mother's heart would break if—"

"Yes, I am sure it would."

They had begun to climb the fields, but she stopped him with a jerk.

"Go back, Mr. Dishart," she implored, clutching his arm with both hands. "You make me very unhappy for no purpose. Oh, why should you risk so much for me?"

"I cannot have you wandering here alone at midnight," Gavin answered, gently.

"That is nothing to me," she said, eagerly, but no longer resenting his air of proprietorship.

"You will never do it again if I can prevent it."

"But you cannot," she said, sadly. "Oh, yes, you can, Mr. Dishart. If you will turn back now I shall promise never to do anything again without first asking myself whether it would seem right to you. I know I acted very wrongly tonight."

"Only thoughtlessly," he said.

"Then have pity on me," she besought him, "and go back. If I have only been thoughtless, how can you punish me thus? Mr. Dishart," she entreated, her voice breaking, "if you were to suffer for this folly of mine, do you think I could live?"

"We are in God's hands, dear," he answered, firmly, and he again drew her arm to him. So they climbed the first field, and were almost at the hill before either spoke again.

"Stop," Babbie whispered, crouching as she spoke; "I see some one crossing the hill."

"I have seen him for some time," Gavin answered, quietly; "but I am doing no wrong, and I will not hide."

The Egyptian had to walk on with him, and I suppose she did not think the less of him for that. Yet she said, warningly:

"If he sees you, all Thrums will be in an uproar before morning."

"I cannot help that," Gavin replied. "It is the will of God."

"To ruin you for my sins?"

"If He thinks fit."

The figure drew nearer, and with every step Babbie's distress doubled.

"We are walking straight to him," she whispered. "I implore you to wait here until he passes, if not for your own sake, for your mother's."

At that he wavered, and she heard his teeth sliding against each other, as if he could no longer clench them.

"But, no," he said, moving on again, "I will not be a skulker from any man. If it be God's wish that I should suffer for this, I must suffer."

"Oh, why," cried Babbie, beating her hands together in grief, "should you suffer for me?"

"You are mine," Gavin answered. Babbie gasped. "And if you act foolishly," he continued, "it is right that I should bear the brunt of it. No, I will not let you go on alone; you are not fit to be alone. You need some one to watch over you, and care for you, and love you, and, if need be, to suffer with you."

"Turn back, dear, before he sees us."

"He has seen us."

Yes, I had seen them, for the figure on the hill was no other than the dominie of Glen Quharity. The park gate clicked as it swung to, and I looked up and saw Gavin and the Egyptian. My eyes should have found them sooner, but it was to gaze upon Margaret's home, while no one saw me, that I had trudged into Thrums so late, and by that time, I suppose, my eyes were of little service for seeing through. Yet, when I knew that of these two people suddenly beside me on the hill, one was the little minister, and the other a strange woman, I fell back from their side with dread before I could step forward and cry "Gavin!"

"I am Mr. Dishart," he answered, with a composure that would not have served him for another sentence. He was more excited than I, for the "Gavin" fell harmlessly on him while I had no sooner uttered it than there rushed through me the shame of being false to Margaret. It was the only time in my life that I forgot her in him, though he has ever stood next to her in my regard.

I looked from Gavin to the gypsy woman, and again from her to him, and she began to tell a lie in his interest. But she got no further than "I met Mr. Dishart accid—" when she stopped, ashamed. It was reverence for Gavin that checked the lie. Not every man has had such a compliment paid him.

"It is natural," Gavin said, slowly, "that you, sir, should wonder why I am here with this woman at such an hour

and you may know me so little as to think ill of me for it."

I did not answer, and he misunderstood my silence.

"No," he continued, in a harder voice, as if I had asked him a question, "I will explain nothing to you. You are not my judge. If you would do me harm, sir, you have it in your power."

It was with these cruel words that Gavin addressed me. He did not know how cruel they were. The Egyptian, I think, must have seen that his suspicions hurt me, for she said, softly, with a look of appeal in her eyes:

"You are the schoolmaster in Glen Quharity? Then you will perhaps save Mr. Dishart the trouble of coming farther, by showing me the way to old Nanny Webster's house at Windyghoul?"

"I have to pass the house, at any rate," I answered, eagerly, and she came quickly to my side.

I knew, though in the darkness I could see but vaguely, that Gavin was holding his head high, and waiting for me to say my worst. I had not told him that I dared think no evil of him, and he still suspected me. Now I would not trust myself to speak, lest I should betray Margaret, and yet I wanted him to know that base doubts about him could never find a shelter in me. I am a timid man, who long ago lost the glory of my life by it, and I was again timid when I sought to let Gavin see that my faith in him was unshaken. I lifted my bonnet to the gypsy, and asked her to take my arm. It was done clumsily, I cannot doubt, but he read my meaning, and held out his hand to me. I had not touched it since he was three years old, and I trembled too much to give it the grasp I owed it. He and I parted without a word, but to the Egyptian he said, "To-morrow, dear, I will see you at Nanny's," and he was to kiss her, but I pulled her a step farther from him, and she put her hands over her face, crying, "No, no!"

If I asked her some questions between the hill and Windyghoul you must not blame me, for this was my affair as well as theirs. She did not answer me; I know now that she did not hear me. But at the mud house she looked abruptly into my face, and said:

"You love him, too!"

I trudged to the schoolhouse with these words for company, and it was less her discovery than her confession that tortured me. How much I slept that night you may guess.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE NEW WORLD, AND THE WOMAN WHO MAY NOT DWELL THEREIN.

Up here in the glen schoolhouse, after my pupils hav straggled home, there comes to me at times, and so sudde that it may be while I am infusing my tea, a hot desir to write great books. Perhaps an hour afterwards I rise beaten, from my desk, flinging all I have written into th fire (yet rescuing some of it on second thought), and curs myself as an ingle-nook man, for I see that one can onl paint what he himself has felt, and in my passion I wis to have all the vices, even to being an impious man, tha I may describe them better. For this may I be pardoned It comes to nothing in the end, save that my tea is brackish

Yet though my solitary life in the glen is cheating me o many experiences, more helpful to a writer than to a Chris tian, it has not been so tame but that I can understand wh Babbie cried when she went into Nanny's garden and saw th new world. Let no one who loves be called altogether un happy. Even love unreturned has its rainbow, and Babb knew that Gavin loved her. Yet she stood in woe among th stiff berry bushes, as one who stretches forth her hands Love and sees him looking for her, and knows she mu shrink from the arms she would lie in, and only call to hi in a voice he cannot hear. This is not a love that is alway bitter. It grows sweet with age. But could that dry th tears of the little Egyptian, who had only been a woma for a day?

Much was still dark to her. Of one obstacle that must kee her and Gavin ever apart she knew, and he did not; but h it been removed she would have given herself to him humbl not in her own longing, but because he wanted her. "B hold what I am," she could have said to him then, and le the rest to him, believing that her unworthiness would n drag him down, it would lose itself so readily in his strengt That Thrums could rise against such a man if he defied she did not believe; but she was to learn the truth presen from a child.

To most of us, I suppose, has come some shock th was to make us different men from that hour, and yet, ha many days elapsed before something of the man we had be

leapt up in us? Babbie thought she had buried her old impulsiveness, and then remembering that from the top of the field she might see Gavin returning from church, she hastened to the hill to look upon him from a distance. Before she reached the gate where I had met her and him, however, she stopped, distressed at her selfishness, and asked, bitterly, "Why am I so different from other women; why should what is so easy to them be so hard to me?"

"Gavin, my beloved!" the Egyptian cried, in her agony, and the wind caught her words and flung them in the air, making sport of her.

She wandered westward over the bleak hill, and by and by came to a great slab called the Standing Stone, on which children often sit and muse until they see gay ladies riding by on palfreys—a kind of horse—and knights in glittering armour, and goblins, and fiery dragons, and other wonders now extinct, of which bare-legged laddies dream, as well as boys in socks. The Standing Stone is in the dyke that separates the hill from a fir wood, and it is the fairy-book of Thrums. If you would be a knight yourself, you must sit on it and whisper to it your desire.

Babbie came to the Standing Stone, and there was a little boy astride it. His hair stood up through holes in his bonnet, and he was very ragged and miserable.

"Why are you crying, little boy?" Babbie asked him, gently; but he did not look up, and the tongue was strange to him.

"How are you greeting so sair?" she asked.

"I'm no greeting very sair," he answered, turning his head from her that a woman might not see his tears. "I'm no greeting so sair but what I grat sairer when my mither died."

"When did she die?" Babbie inquired.

"Lang syne," he answered, still with averted face.

"What is your name?"

"Micah is my name. Rob Dow's my father."

"And have you no brothers nor sisters?" asked Babbie, with a fellow feeling for him.

"No, juist my father," he said.

"You should be the better laddie to him then. Did your mither no tell you to be that afore she died?"

"Ay," he answered, "she telled me aye to hide the bottle frae him when I could get haed o't. She took me into the bed to make me promise that, and syne she died."

"Does your father drink?"

"He hauds mair than any other man in Thrums," Micah replied, almost proudly.

"And he strikes you?" Babbie asked, compassionately.

"That's a lie," retorted the boy, fiercely. "Leastwise, he doesna strike me except when he's mortal, and syne I can jouk him."

"What are you doing there?"

"I'm wishing. It's a wishing stane."

"You are wishing your father wouldna drink."

"No, I'm no," answered Micah. "There was a lang time he didna drink, but the woman has sent him to it again. It's about her I'm wishing. I'm wishing she was in hell."

"What woman is it?" asked Babbie, shuddering.

"I dinna ken," Micah said, "but she's an ill ane."

"Did you never see her at your father's house?"

"Na; if he could get grip o' her he would break her owre his knee. I hearken to him saying that, when he's wild. He says she should be burned for a witch."

"But if he hates her," asked Babbie, "how can she have sic power ower him?"

"It's no him that she has haud o'," replied Micah, still looking away from her.

"Wha is it, then?"

"It's Mr. Dishart."

Babbie was struck as if by an arrow from the wood. It was so unexpected that she gave a cry, and then for the first time Micah looked at her.

"How should that send your father to the drink?" she asked, with an effort.

"Because my father's michty fond o' him," answered Micah, staring strangely at her; "and when the folk ken about the woman, they'll stane the minister out o' Thrums."

The wood faded for a moment from the Egyptian's sight. When it came back, the boy had slid off the Standing Stone and was stealing away.

"Why do you run frae me?" Babbie asked, pathetically.

"I'm fleid at you," he gasped, coming to a standstill at a safe distance; "you're the woman!"

Babbie cowered before her little judge, and he drew nearer her slowly.

"What makes you think that?" she said.

It was a curious time for Babbie's beauty to be paid its most princely compliment.

"Because you're so bonny," Micah whispered across the

dyke. Her tears gave him courage. "You micht gang awa," ie entreated. "If you kent what a differ Mr. Dishart made n my father till you came, you would maybe gang awa. When he's roaring fou I have to sleep in the wood, and it's awfu' cauld. I'm doubting he'll kill me, woman, if you dinna gang awa."

Poor Babbie put her hand to her heart, but the innocent lad continued, mercilessly:

"If ony shame comes to the minister, his auld mither'll die. How have you sic an ill-will at the minister?"

Babbie held up her hands like a supplicant.

"I'll gie you my rabbit," Micah said, "if you'll gang awa. I've juist the ane." She shook her head, and, misunderstanding her, he cried, with his knuckles in his eye, "I'll gie you hem baith, though I'm michty sweer to part wi' Spotty."

Then at last Babbie found her voice.

"Keep your rabbits, laddie," she said, "and greet no more. I'm gaen awa."

"And you'll never come back no more a' your life?" pleaded Micah.

"Never no more a' my life," repeated Babbie.

"And ye'll leave the minister alane for ever and ever?"

"For ever and ever."

Micah rubbed his face dry, and said, "Will you let me stand on the Standing Stane and watch you gaen awa for ever and ever?"

At that a sob broke from Babbie's heart, and looking at her doubtfully, Micah said:

"Maybe you're gey ill for what you've done?"

"Ay," Babbie answered, "I'm gey ill for what I've done."

A minute passed, and in her anguish she did not know that still she was standing at the dyke. Micah's voice roused her:

"You said you would gang awa, and you're no gaen."

Then Babbie went away. The boy watched her across the hill. He climbed the Standing Stone and gazed after her until she was but a coloured ribbon among the broom. When she disappeared into Windyghoul he ran home joyfully, and told his father what a good day's work he had done. Rob struck him for a fool for taking a gypsy's word, and warned him against speaking of the woman in Thrums.

But though Dow believed that Gavin continued to meet the Egyptian secretly, he was wrong. A sum of money for Nanny was sent to the minister, but he could guess only from

whom it came. In vain did he search for Babbie. So
months passed and he gave up the search, persuaded that
should see her no more. He went about his duties with
drawn face that made many folk uneasy when it was ste
and pained them when it tried to smile. But to Margar
though the effort was terrible, he was as he had ever be
and so no thought of a woman crossed her loving breast.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BEGINNING OF THE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

I CAN tell still how the whole of the glen was engag
about the hour of noon on the fourth of August month
day to be among the last forgotten by any of us, though
began as quietly as a roaring March. At the Spittal, betwe
which and Thrums this is a half-way house, were gathe
two hundred men in kilts, and many gentry from the neig
bouring glens, to celebrate the earl's marriage, which w
to take place on the morrow, and thither, too, had gone ma
of my pupils to gather gossip, at which girls of six
trustier hands than boys of twelve. Those of us, howev
who were neither children nor of gentle blood, remained
home, the farmers more taken up with the want of rain, w
become a calamity, than with an old man's wedding, and th
women-folk wringing their hands for rain also, yet find
time to marvel at the marriage's taking place at the Spi
instead of in England, of which the ignorant spoke vagu
as an estate of the bride's.

For my own part I could talk of the disastrous drought w
Waster Lunny as I walked over his parched fields, but I
not such cause as he to brood upon it by day and night;
the ins and outs of the earl's marriage were for discussing
a tea-table, where there were women to help one to con
sions, rather than for the reflections of a solitary domi
who had seen neither bride nor bridegroom. So it must
confessed that when I might have been regarding the
moodily, or at the Spittal, where a free table that day inv
all, I was sitting in the schoolhouse, heeling my left b
on which I have always been a little hard.

I made small speed, not through lack of craft, but bec
one can no more drive in tackets properly than take c

unless he gives his whole mind to it; and half of mine was at the Auld Licht manse. Since our meeting six months earlier on the hill I had not seen Gavin, but I had heard much of him, and of a kind to trouble me.

Wearyworld hobbled after me up the Roods one day, pelting me with remarks, though I was doing my best to get away from him. "Even Rob Dow sees there's something come ower the minister," he bawled, "for Rob's fou ilka Sabbath now. Ay, but this I will say for Mr. Dishart, that he aye gies me a civil word." I thought I had left the policeman behind with this, but next minute he roared, "And whatever is the matter wi' him it has made him kindlier to me than ever." He must have taken the short cut through Lunan's close, for at the top of the Roods his voice again made up on me. "Dagone you, for a cruel pack to put your fingers to your lugs ilka time I open my mouth."

As for Waster Lunny's daughter Easie, who got her schooling free for redding up the schoolhouse and breaking my furniture, she would never have been off the gossip about the minister, for she was her mother in miniature, with a tongue that ran like a pump after the pans are full, not for use but for the mere pleasure of spilling.

On that awful fourth of August I not only had all this confused talk in my head, but reason for jumping my mind between it and the Egyptian (as if to catch them together unawares), and I was like one who, with the mechanism of a watch jumbled in his hand, could set it going if he had the art.

Of the gypsy I knew nothing save what I had seen that night, yet what more was there to learn? I was aware that she loved Gavin and that he loved her. A moment had shown it to me. Now with the Auld Lichts, I have the smith's acquaintance with his irons, and so I could not believe that they would suffer their minister to marry a vagrant. Had it not been for this knowledge, which made me fearful for Margaret, I would have done nothing to keep these two young people apart. Some to whom I have said this maintain that the Egyptian turned my head at our first meeting. Such an argument is not perhaps worth controverting. I admit that even now I straighten under the fire of a bright eye, as a pensioner may salute when he sees a young officer. In the shooting season, should I chance to be leaning over my dyke while English sportsmen pass (as is usually the case if I have seen them approaching), I remember naught of them save that they call me "she," and end their greetings with

"whatever" (which Waster Lunny takes to be a southro mode of speech), but their ladies dwell pleasantly in n memory, from their engaging faces to the pretty crumpl thing dangling on their arms, that is a hat or a basket, I a seldom sure which. The Egyptian's beauty, therefore, was gladsome sight to me, and none the less so that I had cor upon it as unexpectedly as some men step into a bog. H she been alone when I met her I cannot deny that I wou have been content to look on her face, without caring wh was inside it; but she was with her lover, and that lover w Gavin, and so her face was to me as little for admiring this glen in a thunderstorm, when I know that some fellc creature is lost on the hills.

If, however, it was no quick liking for the gypsy that almo tempted me to leave these two lovers to each other, what w it? It was the warning of my own life. Adam Dishart h torn my arm from Margaret's, and I had not recovered t wrench in eighteen years. Rather than act his part betwe these two I felt tempted to tell them, "Deplorable as the res may be, if you who are a minister marry this vagabond, it v be still more deplorable if you do not."

But there was Margaret to consider, and at thought of I I cursed the Egyptian aloud. What could I do to keep Ga and the woman apart? I could tell him the secret of mother's life. Would that be sufficient? It would if he lo Margaret, as I did not doubt. Pity for her would make l undergo any torture rather than she should suffer aga But to divulge our old connection would entail her discov of me, and I questioned if even the saving of Gavin co destroy the bitterness of that.

I might appeal to the Egyptian. I might tell her e what I shuddered to tell him. She cared for him, I was su well enough to have the courage to give him up. But wh was I to find her?

Were she and Gavin meeting still? Perhaps the cha which had come over the little minister meant that they parted. Yet what I had heard him say to her on the warned me not to trust in any such solution of the troubl

From my window I saw a string of people walking rap down the glen, and Waster Lunny crossing his potato fie meet them. Remembering that, though I was in my stock soles, the ground was dry, I hastened to join the farmer, I like to miss nothing. I saw a curious sight. In fron the little procession coming down the glen road, and so n

more impressive than his satellites that they may be put out of mind as merely ploughmen and the like following a show, was a Highlander that I knew to be Lauchlan Campbell, one of the pipers engaged to lend music to the earl's marriage. He had the name of a thrawn man when sober, but pretty at the pipes at both times, and he came marching down the glen blowing gloriously, as if he had the clan of Campbell at his heels. I know no man who is so capable on occasion of looking like twenty as a Highland piper, and never have I seen a face in such a blaze of passion as was Lauchlan Campbell's that day. His following were keeping out of his reach, jumping back every time he turned round to shake his fist in the direction of the Spittal. While this magnificent man was yet some yards from us, I saw Waster Lunny, who had been in the middle of the road to ask questions, fall back in fear, and not being a fighting man myself, I jumped the dyke. Lauchlan gave me a look that sent me farther into the field, and strutted past, shrieking defiance through his pipes, until I lost him and his followers in a bend of the road.

"That's a terrifying spectacle," I heard Waster Lunny say when the music had become but a distant squeal. "You're bonny at louping dykes, dominie, when there is a wild bull in front o' you. Na, I canna tell what has happened, but at the least Lauchlan maun hae dirked the earl. Thae loons cried out to me as they gaed by that he has been blawing awa' at that tune till he canna halt. What a wind's in the crittur! I'm thinking there's a hell in ilka Highlandman."

"Take care, then, Waster Lunny, that you dinna licht it," said an angry voice that made us jump, though it was only Duncan, the farmer's shepherd, who spoke.

"I had forgotten you was a Highlandman yoursel', Duncan," Waster Lunny said, nervously; but Elspeth, who had come to us unnoticed, ordered the shepherd to return to the hillside, which he did haughtily.

"How did you no lay haud on that blast o' wind, Lauchlan Campbell," asked Elspeth of her husband, "and speir at him what had happened at the Spittal? A quarrel afore a marriage brings ill luck."

"I'm thinking," said the farmer, "that Rintoul's making his ain ill luck by marrying on a young leddy."

"A man's never ower auld to marry," said Elspeth.

"No, nor a woman," rejoined Waster Lunny, "when she gets the chance. But, Elspeth, I believe I can guess what

has fired that fearsome piper. Depend upon it, somebody has been speaking disrespectful about the crittur's ancestors."

"His ancestors!" exclaimed Elspeth, scornfully. "I'm thinking mine could hae bocht them at a crown the dozen."

"Hoots," said the farmer, "you're o' a weaving stock, and dinna understand about ancestors. Take a stick to a Highland laddie, and it's no him you hurt, but his ancestors. Likewise it's his ancestors that stanes you for it. When Duncan stalked awa the now, what think you he saw? He saw a farmer's wife dauring to order about his ancestors; and if that's the way wi' a shepherd, what will it be wi' a piper that has the kilts on him a' day to mind him o' his ancestors ilka time he looks down?"

Elspeth retired to discuss the probable disturbance at the Spittal with her family, giving Waster Lunny the opportunity of saying to me impressively:

"Man, man, has it never crossed you that it's a queer thing the like o' you and me having no ancestors? Ay, we had them in a manner o' speaking, no doubt, but they're as completely lost sicht o' as a flagon lid that's fallen ahint the dresser. Hech, sirs, but they would need a gey rubbing to get the rust off them now. I've been thinking that if I was to get my laddies to say their grandfather's name a curran times ilka day, like the Catechism, and they were to do the same wi' their bairns, and it was continued in future generations, we micht raise a fell field o' ancestors in time. Ay, but Elspeth wouldna hear o't. Nothing angers her mair than to hear me speak o' planting trees for the benefit o' them that's to be farmers here after me; and as for ancestors she would howk them up as quick as I could plant them. Losh, dominie, is that a boot in your hand?"

To my mortification I saw that I had run out of the schoolhouse with the boot on my hand as if it were a glove, and back I went straightway, blaming myself for a man wanting in dignity. It was but a minor trouble this, however, even at the time; and to recall it later in the day was to look back on happiness, for though I did not know it yet, Lauchlan playing raised the curtain on the great act of Gavin's life and the twenty-four hours had begun, to which all I have told as yet is no more than the prologue.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SCENE AT THE SPITTAL.

WITHIN an hour after I had left him, Waster Lunny walked into the schoolhouse and handed me his snuff-mull, which I declined politely. It was with this ceremony that we usually opened our conversations.

"I've seen the post," he said, "and he tells me there has been a queer ploy at the Spittal. It's a wonder the marriage hasna been turned into a burial, and all because o' that Highland stirk, Lauchlan Campbell."

Waster Lunny was a man who had to retrace his steps in telling a story if he tried short cuts, and so my custom was to wait patiently while he delved through the ploughed fields that always lay between him and his destination.

"As you ken, Rintoul's so little o' a Scotchman that he's no muckle better than an Englisher. That maun be the reason he hadna mair sense than to tramp on a Highlandman's ancestors, as he tried to tramp on Lauchlan's this day."

"If Lord Rintoul insulted the piper," I suggested, giving the farmer a helping hand cautiously, "it would be through inadvertence. Rintoul only bought the Spittal a year ago, and until then, I daresay, he had seldom been on our side of the Border."

"But what was the insult? Was Lauchlan dismissed?"

"Na, faags! It was waur than that. Dominie, you're dull in the uptake compared to Elspeth. I hadna telled her half the story afore she jaloused the rest. However, to begin again; there's great feasting and rejoicings gaen on at the Spittal the now, and also a banquet, which the post says is twa dinners in one. Weel, there's a curran Ogilvys among the guests, and it was them that egged on her little leddyship to make the daring proposal to the earl. What was the proposal? It was no less than that the twa pipers should be ordered to play 'The Bonny House o' Airlie.' Dominie, I wonder you can tak it so calm when you ken that's the Ogilvys' sang, and that it's aimed at the clan o' Campbell."

"Pooh!" I said. "The Ogilvys and the Campbells used to be mortal enemies, but the feud has been long forgotten."

"Ay, I've heard tell," Waster Lunny said, sceptically, "that Airlie and Argyle shakes hands now like Christians; but I'm thinking that's just afore the Queen. Dinna speak now,

for I'm in the thick o't. Her little leddyship was all hingi
in gold and jewels, the which winna be her ain till the mor
and she leans ower to the earl and whispers to him to g
the pipers to play 'The Bonny House.' He wasna willi
for says he, 'There's Ogilvys at the table, and ane o' t
pipers is a Campbell, and we'll better let sleeping dogs li
However, the Ogilvys lauched at his caution; and he was
infatuated wi' her little leddyship that he gae in, and he cri
out to the pipers to strike up 'The Bonny House.'"

Waster Lunny pulled his chair nearer me and rested H
hand on my knees.

"Dominie," he said, in a voice that fell now and aga
into a whisper, "them looking on swears that when Lauchl
Campbell heard these monstrous orders his face became ug
and black, so that they kent in a jiffy what he would
It's said a' body jumped back frae him in a sudden drea
except poor Angus, the other piper, wha was busy tuning
for 'The Bonny House.' Weel, Angus had got no furth
in the tune than the first skirl when Lauchlan louped at hi
and ripped up the startled crittur's pipes wi' his dirk. T
pipes gae a roar o' agony like a stuck swine, and fell gaspi
on the floor. What happened next was that Lauchlan, v
his dirk handy for onybody that micht try to stop hi
marched once round the table, playing 'The Campbells a
Coming,' and then straucht out o' the Spittal, his chest f
afore him, and his head so weel back that he could see wh
was going on ahint. Frae the Spittal to here he nev
stopped that fearsome tune, and I'se warrant he's blawi
away at it at this moment through the streets o' Thrums

Waster Lunny was not in his usual spirits, or he wou
have repeated his story before he left me, for he had us
ally as much difficulty in coming to an end as in finding
beginning. The drought was to him as serious a matter
death in the house, and as little to be forgotten for a lengt
ened period.

"There's to be a prayer-meeting for rain in the Auld Lic
kirk the night," he told me as I escorted him as far as m
side of the Quharity, now almost a dead stream, pitiable
see, "and I'm gaen; though I'm sweer to leave thae pr
cattle o' mine. You should see how they look at me wh
I gie them mair o' that rotten grass to eat. It's ene
to mak a man greet, for what richt hae I to keep kye wh
I canna meat them?"

Waster Lunny has said to me more than once that t

great surprise of his life was when Elspeth was willing to take him. Many a time, however, I have seen that in him which might have made any weaver's daughter proud of such a man, and I saw it again when we came to the riverside.

"I'm no ane o' thae farmers," he said, truthfully, "that's aye girding at the weather, and Elspeth and me kens that we hae been dealt wi' bountifully since we took this farm wi' gey anxious hearts. That woman, dominie, is eneuch to put a brave face on a coward, and it's no langer syne than yestreen when I was sitting in the dumps, looking at the aurora borealis, which I canna but regard as a messenger o' woe, that she put her hand on my shoulder and she says, 'Waster Lunny, twenty years syne we began life thegither wi' nothing but the claethes on our back, and an it please God we can begin it again, for I hae you, and you hae me, and I'm no cast down if you're no.' Dominie, is there mony sic women in the warld as that?"

"Many a one," I said.

"Ay, man, it shamed me, for I hae a kind o' delight in angering Elspeth, just to see what she'll say. I could hae ta'en her on my knee at that minute, but the bairns was there, and so it wouldna hae dune. But I cheered her up, for, after all, the drought canna put us so far back as we was twenty years syne, unless it's true what my father said, that the aurora borealis is the devil's rainbow. I saw it sax times in July month, and it made me shut my een. You was out admiring it, dominie, but I can never forget that it was seen in the year twelve just afore the great storm. I was only a laddie then, but I mind how that awful wind stripped a' the standing corn in the glen in less time than we've been here at the water's edge. It was called the deil's besom. My father's himmost words to me was, 'It's time eneuch to greet, laddie, when you see the aurora borealis.' I mind he was so complete ruined in an hour that he had to apply for relief frae the poor's rates. Think o' that, and him a proud man. He would tak nothing till one winter day when we was a' starving, and syne I gaed wi' him to speir for't, and he telled me to grip his hand ticht, so that the cauldness o' mine micht gie him courage. They were doling out the charity in the Town's House, and I had never been in't afore. I canna look at it now without thinking o' that day when me and my father gaed up the stair the gither. Mr. Duthie was presiding at the time, and he wasna muckle older than

Mr. Dishart is now. I mind he speired for proof that we was needing, and my father couldna speak. He just pointed at me. 'But you have a good coat on your back yoursel',' Mr. Duthie said, for there were mony waiting, sair needing. 'It was lended him to come here,' I cried, and without a word my father opened the coat, and they saw he had nothing on aneath, and his skin blue wi' cauld. Dominie, Mr. Duthie handed him one shilling and saxpence, and my father's fingers closed greedily on't for a minute, and syne it fell to the ground. They put it back in his hand, and it slipped out again, and Mr. Duthie gave it back to him, saying, 'Are you so cauld as that?' But, oh, man, it wasna cauld that did it, but shame o' being on the rates. The blood a' ran to my father's head, and syne left it as quick, and he flung down the siller and walked out o' the Town House wi' me running after him. We warstled through that winter, God kens how, and it's near a pleasure to me to think o't now, for, rain or no rain, I can never be reduced to sic straits again."

The farmer crossed the water without using the stilts which were no longer necessary, and I little thought, as I returned to the schoolhouse, what terrible things were to happen before he could offer me his snuff-mull again. Serious as his talk had been, it was neither of drought nor of the incident at the Spittal that I sat down to think. My anxiety about Gavin came back to me until I was like a man imprisoned between walls of his own building. It may be that my presentiments of that afternoon look gloomier now than they were, because I cannot return to them save over a night of agony, black enough to darken any time connected with it. Perhaps my spirits only fell as the wind rose, for wind ever takes me back to Harvie, and when I think of Harvie my thoughts are of the saddest. I know that I sat for some hours, now seeing Gavin pay the penalty of marrying the Egyptian, and again drifting back to my days with Margaret, until the wind took to playing tricks with me, so that I heard Adam Dishart enter our home by the sea every time the schoolhouse door shook.

I became used to the illusion after starting several times, and thus when the door did open, about seven o'clock, it was only the wind rushing to my fire like a shivering dog that made me turn my head. Then I saw the Egyptian staring at me, and though her sudden appearance on my threshold was a strange thing, I forgot it in the whiteness

of her face. She was looking at me like one who has asked a question of life or death, and stopped her heart for the reply.

"What is it?" I cried, and for a moment I believe I was glad she did not answer. She seemed to have told me already as much as I could bear.

"He has not heard," she said aloud, in an expressionless voice, and, turning, would have slipped away without another word.

"Is any one dead?" I asked, seizing her hands and letting them fall, they were so clammy. She nodded, and trying to speak could not.

"He is dead," she said at last, in a whisper. "Mr. Dishart is dead," and she sat down quietly.

At that I covered my face, crying, "God help Margaret!" and then she rose, saying fiercely, so that I drew back from her, "There is no Margaret; he only cared for me."

"She is his mother," I said, hoarsely, and then she smiled to me, so that I thought her a harmless mad thing. "He was killed by a piper called Lauchlan Campbell," she said, looking up at me suddenly. "It was my fault."

"Poor Margaret!" I wailed.

"And poor Babbie," she entreated, pathetically; "will no one say, 'Poor Babbie'?"

CHAPTER XXV.

FIRST JOURNEY OF THE DOMINIE TO THRUMS DURING THE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

"How did it happen?" I asked more than once, but the Egyptian was only with me in the body, and she did not hear. I might have been talking to some one a mile away whom a telescope had drawn near my eyes.

When I put on my bonnet, however, she knew that I was going to Thrums, and she rose and walked to the door, looking behind to see that I followed.

"You must not come," I said, harshly, but her hand started to her heart as if I had shot her, and I added, quickly, "Come." We were already some distance on our way before I repeated my question.

"What matter how it happened?" she answered, piteously,

and they were words of which I felt the force. But when she said a little later, "I thought you would say it is not true," I took courage, and forced her to tell me all she knew. She sobbed while she spoke, if one may sob without tears.

"I heard of it at the Spittal," she said. "The news broke out suddenly there that the piper had quarrelled with some one in Thrums, and that in trying to separate them Mr. Dishart was stabbed. There is no doubt of its truth."

"We should have heard of it here," I said, hopefully, "before the news reached the Spittal. It cannot be true."

"It was brought to the Spittal," she answered, "by the hill road."

Then my spirits sank again, for I knew that this was possible. There is a path, steep but short, across the hills between Thrums and the top of the glen, which Mr. Glendinning took frequently when he had to preach at both places on the same Sabbath. It is still called the Minister's Road.

"Yet if the earl had believed it he would have sent some one into Thrums for particulars," I said, grasping at such comfort as I could make.

"He does believe it," she answered. "He told me of it himself."

You see the Egyptian was careless of her secret now; but what was that secret to me? An hour ago it would have been much, and already it was not worth listening to. If she had begun to tell me why Lord Rintoul took a gypsy girl into his confidence I should not have heard her.

"I ran quickly," she said. "Even if a messenger was sent he might be behind me."

Was it her words or the tramp of a horse that made us turn our heads at that moment? I know not. But far back in a twist of the road we saw a horseman approaching at such a reckless pace that I thought he was on a runaway. We stopped instinctively, and waited for him, and twice he disappeared in hollows of the road, and then was suddenly tearing down upon us. I recognised in him young Mr. McKenzie, a relative of Rintoul, and I stretched out my arm to compel him to draw up. He misunderstood my motive and was raising his whip threateningly, when he saw the Egyptian. It is not too much to say that he swayed in the saddle. The horse galloped on, though he had lost hold of the reins. He looked behind until he rounded a corner, and I never saw such amazement mixed with incredulity on a human face. For some minutes I expected to see him come

ng back, but when he did not I said, wonderingly, to the Egyptian:

"He knew you."

"Did he?" she answered, indifferently, and I think we spoke no more until we were in Windyghoul. Soon we were barely conscious of each other's presence. Never since have I walked between the schoolhouse and Thrums in so short a time, nor seen so little on the way.

In the Egyptian's eyes, I suppose, was a picture of Gavin lying dead; but if her grief had killed her thinking faculties, mine, that was only less keen because I had been struck down once before, had set all the wheels of my brain in action. For it seemed to me that the hour had come when I must disclose myself to Margaret.

I had realised always that if such a necessity did arise it could only be caused by Gavin's premature death, or by his proving a bad son to her. Some may wonder that I could have looked calmly thus far into the possible, but I reply that the night of Adam Dishart's home-coming had made of me a man whom the future could not surprise again. Though I saw Gavin and his mother happy in our Auld Licht manse, that did not prevent my considering the contingencies which might leave her without a son. In the schoolhouse I had brooded over them as one may think over moves on a draught-board. It may have been idle, but it was done that I might know how to act best for Margaret if anything untoward occurred. The time for such action had come. Gavin's death had struck me hard, but it did not crush me. I was not unprepared. I was going to Margaret now.

What did I see as I walked quickly along the glen road, with Babbie silent by my side, and I doubt not pods of the broom crackling all around us? I saw myself entering the Auld Licht manse, where Margaret sat weeping over the body of Gavin, and there was none to break my coming to her, for none but she and I knew what had been.

I saw my Margaret again, so fragile now, so thin the wrists, her hair turned gray. No nearer could I go, but stopped at the door, grieving for her, and at last saying her name aloud.

I saw her raise her face, and look upon me for the first time for eighteen years. She did not scream at sight of me, for the body of her son lay between us, and bridged the gulf that Adam Dishart had made.

I saw myself draw near her reverently and say, "M garet, he is dead, and that is why I have come back," a I saw her put her arms round my neck as she often long ago.

But it was not to be. Never since that night at Har have I spoken to Margaret.

The Egyptian and I were to come to Windyghoul bef I heard her speak. She was not addressing me. Here Ga and she had met first, and she was talking of that meet to herself.

"It was there," I heard her say, softly, as she gazed the bush beneath which she had seen him shaking his fist her on the night of the riots. A little farther on she stop where a path from Windyghoul sets off for the well in wood. She looked up it wistfully, and there I left behind, and pressed on to the mud house to ask Nanny W ster if the minister was dead. Nanny's gate was swing in the wind, but her door was shut, and for a moment I st at it like a coward, afraid to enter and hear the worst.

The house was empty. I turned from it relieved, as I had got a respite, and while I stood in the garden Egyptian came to me shuddering, her twitching face ask the question that would not leave her lips.

"There is no one in the house," I said. "Nanny is perh at the well."

But the gypsy went inside, and, pointing to the fire, s "It has been out for hours. Do you not see? The mur has drawn every one into Thrums."

So I feared. A dreadful night was to pass before I k that this was the day of the release of Sanders Webster, that frail Nanny had walked into Tilliedrum to meet hi the prison gate.

Babbie sank upon a stool, so weak that I doubt whet she heard me tell her to wait there until my return. I h ried into Thrums, not by the hill, though it is the sho way, but by the Roods, for I must hear all before I ventu to approach the manse. From Windyghoul to the top the Roods, it is a climb and then a steep descent. The r has no sooner reached its highest point than it begins fall in the straight line of houses called the Roods, thus I came upon a full view of the street at once. A was labouring up it. There were women sitting on st at their doors, and girls playing at palaulays, and out the house nearest me came a black figure. My eyes ta

me; I was asking so much from them. They made him tall and short, and spare and stout, so that I knew it was Gavin, and yet, looking again, feared, but all the time, I think, I knew it was he.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE HILL BEFORE DARKNESS FELL—SCENE OF THE IMPENDING CATASTROPHE.

"You are better now?" I heard Gavin ask, presently.

He thought that having been taken ill suddenly I had waved to him for help because he chanced to be near. With all my wits about me I might have left him in that belief, for rather would I have deceived him than had him wonder why his welfare seemed so vital to me. But I, who thought the capacity for being taken aback had gone from me, clung to his arm, and thanked God audibly that he still lived. He did not tell me then how my agitation puzzled him, but led me kindly to the hill, where we could talk without listeners. By the time we reached it I was again wary, and I had told him what had brought me to Thrums, without mentioning how the story of his death reached my ears, or through whom.

"Mr. McKenzie," he said, interrupting me, "galloped all the way from the Spittal on the same errand. However, no one has been hurt much, except the piper himself."

Then he told me how the rumour arose.

"You know of the incident at the Spittal, and that Campbell marched off in high dudgeon? I understand that he spoke to no one between the Spittal and Thrums, but by the time he arrived here he was more communicative, yes, and thirstier. He was treated to drink in several public-houses by persons who wanted to hear his story, and by and by he began to drop hints of knowing something against the earl's bride. Do you know Rob Dow?"

"Yes," I answered, "and what you have done for him."

"Ah, sir!" he said, sighing, "for a long time I thought I was to be God's instrument in making a better man of Rob, but my power over him went long ago. Ten short months of the ministry takes some of the vanity out of a man."

Looking sideways at him I was startled by the unnatural

brightness of his eyes. Unconsciously he had acquired th habit of pressing his teeth together in the pauses of h talk, shutting them on some woe that would proclaim itse as men do who keep their misery to themselves.

"A few hours ago," he went on, "I heard Rob's voice altercation as I passed the Bull tavern, and I had a feelin that if I failed with him so should I fail always throughou my ministry. I walked into the public-house, and stopped the door of a room in which Dow and the piper were sittin drinking. I heard Rob saying, fiercely, 'If what you sa about her is true, Highlandman, she's the woman I've bee looking for this half year and mair; what is she like I guessed, from what I had been told of the piper, that the were speaking of the earl's bride; but Rob saw me and can to an abrupt stop, saying to his companion, 'Dinna say a other word about her afore the minister.' Rob would hav come away at once, in answer to my appeal, but the pip was drunk, and would not be silenced. 'I'll tell the minist about her, too,' he began. 'You dinna ken what you're doing Rob roared, and then, as if to save my ears from scand at any cost, he struck Campbell a heavy blow on the mout I tried to intercept the blow, with the result that I fell, an then some one ran out of the tavern crying, 'He's killed The piper had been stunned, but the story went abroad th he had stabbed me for interfering with him. That is real all. Nothing, as you know, can overtake an untruth if has a minute's start."

"Where is Campbell now?"

"Sleeping off the effect of the blow; but Dow has fle He was terrified at the shouts of murder, and ran off up th West Town end. The doctor's dog-cart was standing at door there, and Rob jumped into it and drove off. The did not chase him far, because he is sure to hear the tru soon, and then, doubtless, he will come back."

Though in a few hours we were to wonder at our dens ness, neither Gavin nor I saw why Dow had struck th Highlander down rather than let him tell his story in th minister's presence. One moment's suspicion would hav lit our way to the whole truth, but of the spring to all Rob behaviour in the past eight months we were ignorant, an so to Gavin the Bull had only been the scene of a drunke brawl, while I forgot to think in the joy of finding hi alive.

"I have a prayer-meeting for rain presently," Gavin sai

reaking a picture that had just appeared unpleasantly be-
ore me of Babbie still in agony at Nanny's, "but before
leave you, tell me why this rumour caused you such
istress."

The question troubled me, and I tried to avoid it. Cross-
ng the hill we had by this time drawn near a hollow called
he Toad's-hole, then gay and noisy with a caravan of
ypsies. They were those same wild Lindsays, for whom
Gavin had searched Caddam one eventful night, and as I saw
hem crowding round their king, a man well known to me,
guessed what they were at.

"Mr. Dishart," I said, abruptly, "would you like to see
. gypsy marriage? One is taking place there just now.
That big fellow is the king, and he is about to marry two of
iis people over the tongs. The ceremony will not detain
is five minutes, though the rejoicings will go on all night."

I have been present at more than one gypsy wedding in
ny time, and at the wild, weird orgies that followed them,
ut what is interesting to such as I may not be for a min-
ster's eyes, and, frowning at my proposal, Gavin turned
iis back upon the Toad's-hole. Then, as we recrossed the
ill, to get away from the din of the camp, I pointed out to
im that the report of his death had brought McKenzie to
Thrums, as well as me.

"As soon as McKenzie heard I was not dead," he answered,
'he galloped off to the Spittal, without even seeing me. I
suppose he posted back to be in time for the night's re-
joicings there. So you see, it was not solicitude for me
:hat brought him. He came because a servant at the Spittal
was supposed to have done the deed."

"Well, Mr. Dishart," I had to say, "why should I deny
:hat I have a warm regard for you? You have done brave
work in our town."

"It has been little," he replied. "With God's help it will
be more in future."

He meant that he had given time to his sad love affair
that he owed to his people. Of seeing Babbie again I saw
that he had given up hope. Instead of repining, he was
devoting his whole soul to God's work. I was proud of
him, and yet I grieved, for I could not think that God wanted
him to bury his youth so soon.

"I had thought," he confessed to me, "that you were one
of those who did not like my preaching."

"You were mistaken." I said, gravely. I dared not tell

him that, except his mother, none would have sat un
him so eagerly as I.

"Nevertheless," he said, "you were a member of the A
Licht church in Mr. Carfrae's time, and you left it w
I came."

"I heard your first sermon," I said.

"Ah," he replied. "I had not been long in Thrums bef
I discovered that if I took tea with any of my congregat
and declined a second cup, they thought it a reflection
their brewing."

"You must not look upon my absence in that light," w
all I could say. "There are reasons why I cannot come."

He did not press me further, thinking I meant that
distance was too great, though frailer folk than I wall
twenty miles to hear him. We might have parted thus l
we not wandered by chance to the very spot where I l
met him and Babbie. There is a seat there now for th
who lose their breath on the climb up, and so I have two r
sons nowadays for not passing the place by.

We read each other's thoughts, and Gavin said, calm
"I have not seen her since that night. She disappeared
into a grave."

How could I answer when I knew that Babbie was dy
for want of him, not half a mile away?

"You seemed to understand everything that night," he w
on; "or if you did not, your thoughts were very gener
to me."

In my sorrow for him I did not notice that we were m
ing on again, this time in the direction of Windyghoul.

"She was only a gypsy girl," he said, abruptly, anc
nodded. "But I hoped," he continued, "that she would
my wife."

"I understood that," I said.

"There was nothing monstrous to you," he asked, looki
me in the face, "in a minister's marrying a gypsy?"

I own that if I had loved a girl, how ever far below
above me in degree, I would have married her had she be
willing to take me. But to Gavin I only answered, "Th
are matters a man must decide for himself."

"I had decided for myself," he said, emphatically.

"Yet," I said, wanting him to talk to me of Margar
"in such a case one might have others to consider besi
himself."

"A man's marriage," he answered, "is his own affair.

would have brooked no interference from my congregation."

I thought, "There is some obstinacy left in him still;" but aloud I said, "It was of your mother I was thinking."

"She would have taken Babbie to her heart," he said, with the fond conviction of a lover.

I doubted it, but I only asked, "Your mother knows nothing of her?"

"Nothing," he rejoined. "It would be cruelty to tell my mother of her now that she is gone."

Gavin's calmness had left him, and he was striding quickly nearer to Windyghoul. I was in dread lest he should see the Egyptian at Nanny's door, yet to have turned him in another direction might have roused his suspicions. When we were within a hundred yards of the mud house, I knew that there was no Babbie in sight. We halved the distance, and then I saw her at the open window. Gavin's eyes were on the ground, but she saw him. I held my breath, fearing that she would run out to him.

"You have never seen her since that night?" Gavin asked me, without hope in his voice.

Had he been less hopeless, he would have wondered why I did not reply immediately. I was looking covertly at the mud house, of which we were now within a few yards. Babbie's face had gone from the window, and the door remained shut. That she could hear every word we uttered now, I could not doubt. But she was hiding from the man for whom her soul longed. She was sacrificing herself for him.

"Never," I answered, notwithstanding my pity of the brave girl, and then, while I was shaking lest he should go in to visit Nanny, I heard the echo of the Auld Licht bell.

"That calls me to the meeting for rain," Gavin said, bidding me good night. I had acted for Margaret, and yet I had hardly the effrontery to take his hand. I suppose he saw sympathy in my face, for suddenly the cry broke from him:

"If I could only know that nothing evil had befallen her!"

Babbie heard him and could not restrain a heart-breaking sob.

"What was that?" he said, starting.

A moment I waited, to let her show herself if she chose. But the mud house was silent again.

"It was some boy in the wood," I answered.

"Good-bye," he said, trying to smile.

Had I let him go, here would have been the end of his love story, but that piteous smile unmanned me, and I could not keep the words back.

"She is in Nanny's house," I cried.

In another moment these two were together for weal or woe, and I had set off dizzily for the schoolhouse, feeling now that I had been false to Margaret, and again exulting in what I had done. By and by the bell stopped, and Gavin and Babbie regarded it as little as I heeded the burns now crossing the glen road noisily at places that had been dry two hours before.

CHAPTER XXVII.

STORY OF THE EGYPTIAN.

God gives us more than, were we not over-bold, we should dare to ask for, and yet how often (perhaps after saying "Thank God" so curtly that it is only a form of swearing) we are suppliants again within the hour. Gavin was to be satisfied if he were told that no evil had befallen her he loved, and all the way between the schoolhouse and Windyghoul Babbie craved for no more than Gavin's life. Now they had got their desires; but do you think they were content?

The Egyptian had gone on her knees when she heard Gavin speak of her. It was her way of preventing herself from running to him. Then, when she thought him gone, he opened the door. She rose and shrank back, but first she had stepped towards him with a glad cry. His disappointed arms met on nothing.

"You, too, heard that I was dead?" he said, thinking her strangeness but grief too sharply turned to joy.

There were tears in the word with which she answered him, and he would have kissed her, but she defended her face with her hand.

"Babbie," he asked, beginning to fear that he had not sounded her deepest woe, "why have you left me all this time? You are not glad to see me now?"

"I was glad," she answered, in a low voice, "to see you

from the window, but I prayed to God not to let you see me."

She even pulled away her hand when he would have taken it. "No, no, I am to tell you everything now, and then—"

"Say that you love me first," he broke in, when a sob checked her speaking.

"No," she said, "I must tell you first what I have done, and then you will not ask me to say that. I am not a gypsy."

"What of that?" cried Gavin. "It was not because you were a gypsy that I loved you."

"That is the last time you will say you love me," said Babbie. "Mr. Dishart, I am to be married to-morrow."

She stopped, afraid to say more lest he should fall, but except that his arms twitched he did not move.

"I am to be married to Lord Rintoul," she went on. "Now you know who I am."

She turned from him, for his piercing eyes frightened her. Never again, she knew, would she see the love-light in them. He plucked himself from the spot where he had stood looking at her and walked to the window. When he wheeled round there was no anger on his face, only a pathetic wonder that he had been deceived so easily. It was at himself that he was smiling grimly rather than at her, and the change pained Babbie as no words could have hurt her. He sat down on a chair and waited for her to go on.

"Don't look at me," she said, "and I will tell you everything." He dropped his eyes listlessly, and had he not asked her a question from time to time, she would have doubted whether he heard her.

"After all," she said, "a gypsy dress is my birthright, and so the Thrums people were scarcely wrong in calling me an Egyptian. It is a pity any one insisted on making me something different. I believe I could have been a good gypsy."

"Who were your parents?" Gavin asked, without looking up.

"You ask that," she said, "because you have a good mother. It is not a question that would occur to me. My mother—If she was bad, may not that be some excuse for me? Ah, but I have no wish to excuse myself. Have you seen a gypsy cart with a sort of hammock swung beneath it in which gypsy children are carried about the country? If there are no children, the pots and pans are stored in it.

Unless the roads are rough it makes a comfortable cradle and it was the only one I ever knew. Well, one day I suppose the road was rough, for I was capsized. I remember picking myself up after a little and running after the cart but they did not hear my cries. I sat down by the roadside and stared after the cart until I lost sight of it. That was in England, and I was not three years old."

"But surely," Gavin said, "they came back to look for you?"

"So far as I know," Babbie answered, hardly, "they did not come back. I have never seen them since. I think they were drunk. My only recollection of my mother is that she once took me to see the dead body of some gypsy who had been murdered. She told me to dip my hand in the blood, so that I could say I had done so when I became a woman. It was meant as a treat to me, and is the one kindness I am sure I got from her. Curiously enough, I felt the shame of her deserting me for many years afterwards. As a child I cried hysterically at thought of it; it pained me when I was at school in Edinburgh every time I saw the other girls writing home; I cannot think of it without a shudder even now. It is what makes me worse than other women."

Her voice had altered, and she was speaking passionately.

"Sometimes," she continued, more gently, "I try to think that my mother did come back for me, and then went away because she heard I was in better hands than hers. It was Lord Rintoul who found me, and I owe everything to him. You will say that he has no need to be proud of me. He took me home on his horse, and paid his gardener's wife to rear me. She was Scotch, and that is why I can speak two languages. It was he, too, who sent me to school in Edinburgh."

"He has been very kind to you," said Gavin, who would have preferred to dislike the earl.

"So kind," answered Babbie, "that now he is to marry me. But do you know why he has done all this?"

Now again she was agitated, and spoke indignantly.

"It is all because I have a pretty face," she said, her bosom rising and falling. "Men think of nothing else. He had no pity for the deserted child. I knew that while I was yet on his horse. When he came to the gardener's afterwards, it was not to give me some one to love, it was only to look upon what was called my beauty; I was merely a

picture to him, and even the gardener's children knew it and sought to terrify me by saying, 'You are losing your looks; the earl will not care for you any more.' Sometimes he brought his friends to see me, 'because I was such a lovely child,' and if they did not agree with him on that point he left without kissing me. Throughout my whole girlhood I was taught nothing but to please him, and the only way to do that was to be pretty. It was the only virtue worth striving for; the others were never thought of when he asked how I was getting on. Once I had fever and nearly died, yet this knowledge that my face was everything was implanted in me so that my fear lest he should think me ugly when I recovered terrified me into hysterics. I dream still that I am in that fever, and all my fears return. He did think me ugly when he saw me next. I remember the incident so well still. I had run to him, and he was lifting me up to kiss me when he saw that my face had changed. 'What a cruel disappointment,' he said, and turned his back on me. I had given him a child's love until then, but from that day I was hard and callous."

"And when was it you became beautiful again?" Gavin asked, by no means in the mind to pay compliments.

"A year passed," she continued, "before I saw him again. In that time he had not asked for me once, and the gardener had kept me out of charity. It was by an accident that we met, and at first he did not know me. Then he said, 'Why, Babbie, I believe you are to be a beauty, after all!' I hated him for that, and stalked away from him, but he called after me, 'Bravo! she walks like a queen;' and it was because I walked like a queen that he sent me to an Edinburgh school. He used to come to see me every year, and as I grew up the girls called me Lady Rintoul. He was not fond of me; he is not fond of me now. He would as soon think of looking at the back of a picture as at what I am apart from my face, but he dotes on it, and is to marry it. Is that love? Long before I left school, which was shortly before you came to Thrums, he had told his sister that he was determined to marry me, and she hated me for it, making me as uncomfortable as she could, so that I almost looked forward to the marriage because it would be such a humiliation to her."

In admitting this she looked shamefacedly at Gavin, and then went on:

"It is humiliating him, too. I understand him. He would

like not to want to marry me, for he is ashamed of my origin, but he cannot help it. It is this feeling that has brought him here, so that the marriage may take place where my history is not known."

"The secret has been well kept," Gavin said, "for they have failed to discover it even in Thrums."

"Some of the Spittal servants suspect it, nevertheless," Babbie answered, "though how much they know I cannot say. He has not a servant now, either here or in England, who knew me as a child. The gardener who befriended me was sent away long ago. Lord Rintoul looks upon me as a disgrace to him that he cannot live without."

"I daresay he cares for you more than you think," Gavin said, gravely.

"He is infatuated about my face, or the pose of my head, or something of that sort," Babbie said, bitterly, "or he would not have endured me so long. I have twice had the wedding postponed, chiefly, I believe, to enrage my natural enemy, his sister, who is as much aggravated by my reluctance to marry him as by his desire to marry me. However, I also felt that imprisonment for life was approaching as the day drew near, and I told him that if he did not defer the wedding I should run away. He knows I am capable of it, for twice I ran away from school. If his sister only knew that!"

For a moment it was the old Babbie Gavin saw; but her glee was short-lived, and she resumed, sedately:

"They were kind to me at school, but the life was so dull and prim that I ran off in a gypsy dress of my own making. That is what it is to have gypsy blood in one. I was away for a week the first time, wandering the country alone, telling fortunes, dancing and singing in woods, and sleeping in barns. I am the only woman in the world well brought up who is not afraid of mice or rats. That is my gypsy blood again. After that wild week I went back to the school of my own will, and no one knows of the escapade but my school mistress and Lord Rintoul."

"And then you came to the Spittal?"

"Yes; and Lord Rintoul wanted me to say I was sorry for what I had done, but I told him I need not say that, for I was sure to do it again. As you know, I have done it several times since then; and though I am a different woman since I knew you, I dare say I shall go on doing it at times all my life. You shake your head because you do

not understand. It is not that I make up my mind to break out in that way; I may not have had the least desire to do it for weeks, and then suddenly, when I am out riding, or at dinner, or at a dance, the craving to be a gypsy again is so strong that I never think of resisting it; I would risk my life to gratify it. Yes, whatever my life in the future is to be, I know that must be a part of it. I used to pretend at the Spittal that I had gone to bed, and then escape by the window. I was mad with glee at those times, but I always returned before morning, except once, the last time I saw you, when I was away for nearly twenty-four hours. Lord Rintoul was so glad to see me come back then that he almost forgave me for going away. There is nothing more to tell except that on the night of the riot it was not my gypsy nature that brought me to Thrums, but a desire to save the poor weavers. I had heard Lord Rintoul and the sheriff discussing the contemplated raid. I have hidden nothing from you. In time, perhaps, I shall have suffered sufficiently for all my wickedness."

Gavin rose wearedly, and walked through the mud house looking at her.

"This is the end of it all," he said, harshly, coming to a standstill. "I love you, Babbie."

"No," she answered, shaking her head. "You never knew me until now, and so it was not me you loved. I know what you thought I was, and I will try to be it now."

"If you had only told me this before," the minister said, sadly, "it might not have been too late."

"I only thought you like all the other men I knew," she replied, "until the night I came to the manse. It was only my face you admired at first."

"No, it was never that," Gavin said with such conviction that her mouth opened in alarm to ask him if he did not think her pretty. She did not speak, however, and he continued, "You must have known that I loved you from the first night."

"No; you only amused me," she said, like one determined to stint nothing of the truth. "Even at the well I laughed at your vows."

This wounded Gavin afresh, wretched as her story had made him, and he said, tragically, "You have never cared for me at all."

"Oh, always, always," she answered, "since I knew what love was; and it was you who taught me."

Even in his misery he held his head high with pride. A least she did love him.

"And then," Babbie said, hiding her face, "I could not te you what I was because I knew you would loathe me. could only go away."

She looked at him forlornly through her tears, and the moved towards the door. He had sunk upon a stool, h face resting on the table, and it was her intention to sli away unnoticed. But he heard the latch rise, and, jumpin up, said sharply, "Babbie, I cannot give you up."

She stood in tears, swinging the door unconsciously wit her hand.

"Don't say that you love me still," she cried; and the letting her hand fall from the door, added, imploringl "Oh, Gavin, do you?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MEETING FOR RAIN.

MEANWHILE the Auld Lichts were in church, waiting f their minister, and it was a full meeting, because near every well in Thrums had been scooped dry by anxio palms. Yet not all were there to ask God's rain for ther selves. Old Charles Yuill was in his pew, after dreamir thrice that he would break up with the drought; and Be Christison had come, though her man lay dead at hon and she thought it could matter no more to her how thin went in the world.

You, who do not love that little congregation, would ha said that they were waiting placidly. But probably so simp a woman as Meggy Rattray could have deceived you into l lieving that because her eyes were downcast she did n notice who put the three-penny-bit in the plate. A few m were unaware that the bell was working overtime, most them farmers with their eyes on the windows, but all t women at least were wondering. They knew better, howev than to bring their thoughts to their faces, and none soug to catch another's eye. The menfolk looked heavily at the hats in the seats in front. Even when Hendry Munn, i stead of marching to the pulpit with the big Bible in l hands, came as far as the plate and signed to Peter To

elder, that he was wanted in the vestry, you could not have guessed how every woman there except Bell Christison wished she was Peter Tosh. Peter was so taken aback that he merely gaped at Hendry, until suddenly he knew that his five daughters were furious with him, when he dived for his hat and staggered to the vestry with his mouth open. His boots cheeped all the way, but no one looked up.

In the vestry Hendry Munn was now holding counsel with three elders, of whom the chief was Lang Tammas.

"The laddie I sent to the manse," Hendry said, "canna be back this five minutes, and the question is how we're to fill up that time. I'll ring no langer, for the bell has been in a passion ever since a quarter past eight. It's as sweer to clang past the quarter as a horse to gallop by its stable."

"You could gang to your box and gie out a psalm, Tammas," suggested John Spens.

"And would a psalm sung wi' sic an object," retorted the precentor, "mount higher, think you, than a bairn's kite? I'll insult the Almighty to screen no minister."

"You're screening him better by standing whaur you are," said the imperturbable Hendry; "for as lang as you dinna show your face they'll think it may be you that's missing instead o' Mr. Dishart."

Indeed, Gavin's appearance in church without the precentor would have been as surprising as Tammas's without the minister. As certainly as the shutting of a money-box is followed by the turning of the key, did the precentor walk stiffly from the vestry to his box a toll of the bell in front of the minister. Tammas's halfpenny rang in the plate as Gavin passed T'nowhead's pew, and Gavin's sixpence with the snapping-to of the precentor's door. The two men might have been connected by a string that tightened at ten yards.

"The congregation ken me ower weel," Tammas said, "to believe I would keep the Lord waiting."

"And they are as sure o' Mr. Dishart," rejoined Spens, with spirit, though he feared the precentor on Sabbaths and at prayer-meetings. "You're a hard man."

"I speak the blunt truth," Whamond answered.

"Ay," said Spens, "and to tak credit for that may be like blawing that you're ower honest to wear claethes."

Hendry, who had gone to the door, returned now with the information that Mr. Dishart had left the manse two

hours ago to pay visits, meaning to come to the prayer-mee ing before he returned home.

"There's a quirk in this, Hendry," said Tosh. "Was Mistress Dishart the laddie saw?"

"No," Hendry replied. "It was Jean. She canna get t the meeting because the mistress is nervous in the mana by herself; and Jean didna like to tell her that he's missin for fear o' alarming her. What are we to do now?"

"He's an unfaithful shepherd," cried the precentor, whi Hendry again went out. "I see it written on the walls."

"I dinna," said Spens, doggedly.

"Because," retorted Tammas, "having eyes you see not."

"Tammas, I aye thocht you was fond o' Mr. Dishart.

"If my right eye were to offend me," answered the pr centor, "I would pluck it out. I suppose you think, ar baith o' you farmers, too, that there's no necessity for pra ing for rain the nicht? You'll be content, will ye, if M Dishart just drops in to the kirk some day, accidental-lik and offers up a bit prayer?"

"As for the rain," Spens said, triumphantly, "I would wonder though it's here afore the minister. You canna den Peter Tosh, that there's been a smell o' rain in the air th twa hours back."

"John," Peter said, agitatedly, "dinna speak so confidentl I've kent it," he whispered, "since the day turned; but wants to tak us by surprise, lad, and so I'm no letting on."

"See that you dinna make an idol o' the rain," thunder Whamond. "Your thochts is no wi' Him, but wi' the cloud and whaur your thochts are, there will your prayers sti also."

"If you saw my lambs," Tosh began; and then, ashamed himself, said, looking upward, "He holds the rain in t hollow of His hand."

"And He's closing His neive ticht on't again," said t precentor, solemnly. "Hearken to the wind rising!"

"God help me!" cried Tosh, wringing his hands. "Is fair, think you," he said, passionately addressing the sk "to show your wrath wi' Mr. Dishart by ruining r neeps?"

"You were richt, Tammas Whamond," Spens said, gro ing hard as he listened to the wind, "the sanctuary o' the L has been profaned this nicht by him wha should be the ch pillar o' the building."

They were lowering brows that greeted Hendry when

returned to say that Mr. Dishart had been seen last on the hill with the Glen Quharity dominie.

"Some thinks," said the kirk officer, "that he's awa hunting for Rob Dow."

"Nothing'll excuse him," replied Spens, "short o' his having fallen over the quarry."

Hendry's was usually a blank face, but it must have looked troubled now, for Tosh was about to say, "Hendry, you're keeping something back," when the precentor said it before him.

"Wi' that story o' Mr. Dishart's murder, no many hours auld yet," the kirk officer replied, evasively, "we should be wary o' trusting gossip."

"What hae you heard?"

"It's through the town," Hendry answered, "that a woman was wi' the dominie."

"A woman!" cried Tosh. "The woman there's been sic talk about in connection wi' the minister? Whaur are they now?"

"It's no kent, but—the dominie was seen goin' hame by himsel'."

"Leaving the minister and her thegither!" cried the three men at once.

"Hendry Munn," Tammas said, sternly, "there's mair about this; wha is the woman?"

"They are liars," Hendry answered, and shut his mouth tight.

"Gie her a name, I say," the precentor ordered, "or, as chief elder of this kirk, supported by mair than half o' the session, I command you to lift your hat and go."

Hendry gave an appealing look to Tosh and Spens, but the precentor's solemnity had cowed them.

"They say, then," he answered, sullenly, "that it's the Egyptian. Yes, and I believe they ken."

The two farmers drew back from this statement incredulously; but Tammas Whamond jumped at the kirk officer's throat, and some who were in the church that night say they heard Hendry scream. Then the precentor's fingers relaxed their grip, and he tottered into the middle of the room.

"Hendry," he pleaded, holding out his arms pathetically, "tak back these words. Oh, man, have pity, and tak them back!"

But Hendry would not, and then Lang Tammas's mouth

worked convulsively, and he sobbed, crying, "Nobody ken it, but mair than mortal son, O God, I did love the lad!"

So seldom in a lifetime had any one seen into this man's heart that Spens said, amazed:

"Tammas, Tammas Whamond, it's no like you to break down."

The rusty door of Whamond's heart swung to.

"Who broke down?" he asked, fiercely. "Let no member of this session dare to break down till his work be done."

"What work?" Tosh said, uneasily. "We canna interfere."

"I would rather resign," Spens said, but shook when Whamond hurled these words at him:

"'And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'"

"It mayna be true," Hendry said, eagerly.

"We'll soon see."

"He would gie her up," said Tosh.

"Peter Tosh," answered Whamond, sternly, "I call upon you to dismiss the congregation."

"Should we no rather haud the meeting oursel's?"

"We have other work afore us," replied the precentor.

"But what can I say?" Tosh asked, nervously. "Shoul I offer up a prayer?"

"I warn you all," broke in Hendry, "that though the congregation is sitting there quietly, they'll be tigers for the meaning o' this as soon as they're in the street."

"Let no ontruth be telled them," said the precentor. "Peter Tosh, do your duty. John Spens, remain wi' me."

The church emptied silently, but a buzz of excitement arose outside. Many persons tried to enter the vestry, but were ordered away, and when Tosh joined his fellow elders the people were collecting in animated groups in the square, or scattering through the wynds for news.

"And now," said the precentor, "I call upon the three o' you to come wi' me. Hendry Munn, you gang first."

"I maun bide ahint," Hendry said, with a sudden fear "to lock up the kirk."

"I'll lock up the kirk," Whamond answered, harshly.

"You maun gie me the keys, though," entreated the kirk officer.

"I'll take care o' the keys," said Whamond.

"I maun hae them," Hendry said, "to open the kirk on Sabbath."

The precentor locked the doors, and buttoned up the keys in his trousers pockets.

"Wha kens," he said, in a voice of steel, "that the kirk'll be open next Sabbath?"

"Hae some mercy on him, Tammas," Spens implored. "He's no twa-and-twenty."

"Wha kens," continued the precentor, "but that the next time this kirk is opened will be to preach it toom?"

"What road do we tak?"

"The road to the hill, whaur he was seen last."

CHAPTER XXIX.

VARIOUS BODIES CONVERGING ON THE HILL.

It would be coming on for a quarter past nine, and a misty night, when I reached the schoolhouse, and I was so weary of mind and body that I sat down without taking off my bonnet. I had left the door open, and I remember listlessly watching the wind making a target of my candle, but never taking a sufficiently big breath to do more than frighten it. From this lethargy I was roused by the sound of wheels.

In the daytime our glen road leads to many parts, but in the night only to the doctor's. Then the gallop of a horse makes farmers start up in bed and cry, "Who's ill?" I went to my door and listened to the trap coming swiftly down the lonely glen, but I could not see it, for there was a trailing scarf of mist between the schoolhouse and the road. Presently I heard the swish of the wheels in water, and so learned that they were crossing the ford to come to me. I had been unstrung by the events of the evening, and fear at once pressed thick upon me that this might be a sequel to them, as indeed it was.

While still out of sight the trap stopped, and I heard some one jump from it. Then came this conversation, as distinct as though it had been spoken into my ear:

"Can you see the schoolhouse now, McKenzie?"

"I am groping for it, Rintoul. The mist seems to have made off with the path."

"Where are you, McKenzie? I have lost sight of you."

It was but a ribbon of mist, and as these words were spoken McKenzie broke through it. I saw him, though to him I was only a stone at my door.

"I have found the house, Rintoul," he shouted, "and there is a light in it, so that the fellow has doubtless returned."

"Then wait a moment for me."

"Stay where you are, Rintoul, I entreat you, and leave him to me. He may recognise you."

"No, no, McKenzie, I am sure he never saw me before. I insist on accompanying you."

"Your excitement, Rintoul, will betray you. Let me go alone. I can question him without rousing his suspicions. Remember, she is only a gypsy to him."

"He will learn nothing from me. I am quite calm now.

"Rintoul, I warn you your manner will betray you, and to-morrow it will be roared through the country-side that your bride ran away from the Spittal in a gypsy dress, and had to be brought back by force."

The altercation may have lasted another minute, but the suddenness with which I learned Babbie's secret had left my ears incapable of learning more. I daresay the two men started when they found me at my door, but they did not remember, as few do remember who have the noisy daily to forget it in, how far the voice carries in the night.

They came as suddenly on me as I on them, for though they had given unintentional notice of their approach, I had lost sight of the speakers in their amazing words. Only a moment did young McKenzie's anxiety to be spokesman give me to regard Lord Rintoul. I saw that he was a thin man and tall, straight in the figure, but his head began to sink into his shoulders and not very steady on them. His teeth had grip of his underlip, as if this was a method of controlling his agitation, and he was opening and shutting his hands restlessly. He had a dog with him which I was to meet again.

"Well met, Mr. Ogilvy," said McKenzie, who knew me slightly, having once acted as judge at a cock-fight in the schoolhouse. "We were afraid we should have to rouse you."

"You will step inside?" I asked, awkwardly, and while I spoke I was wondering how long it would be before the earl's excitement broke out.

"It is not necessary," McKenzie answered, hurriedly. "My friend and I (this is Mr. McClure) have been caught

in the mist without a lamp, and we thought you could perhaps favour us with one."

"Unfortunately I have nothing of the kind," I said, and the state of mind I was in is shown by my answering seriously.

"Then we must wish you a good night and manage as best we can," he said; and then before he could touch, with affected indifference, on the real object of their visit, the alarmed earl said, angrily, "McKenzie, no more of this."

"No more of this delay, do you mean, McClure?" asked McKenzie, and then, turning to me, said, "By the way, Mr. Ogilvy, I think this is our second meeting to-night. I met you on the road a few hours ago with your wife. Or was it your daughter?"

"It was neither, Mr. McKenzie," I answered, with the calmness of one not yet recovered from a shock. "It was a gypsy girl."

"Where is she now?" cried Rintoul, feverishly; but McKenzie, speaking loudly at the same time, tried to drown his interference as one obliterates writing by writing over it.

"A strange companion for a schoolmaster," he said. "What became of her?"

"I left her near Caddam Wood," I replied, "but she is probably not there now."

"Ah, they are strange creatures, these gypsies!" he said, casting a warning look at the earl. "Now I wonder where she had been bound for."

"There is a gypsy encampment on the hill," I answered, though I cannot say why.

"She is there!" exclaimed Rintoul, and was done with me.

"I daresay," McKenzie said, indifferently. "However, it is nothing to us. Good night, sir."

"Good night, Mr. McKenzie," I said. "Good night, Lord Rintoul."

I had addressed him by his real name. Never a turnip fell from a bumping, laden cart, and the driver more unconscious of it, than I that I had dropped that word. I reentered the house, but had not reached my chair when McKenzie's hand fell roughly on me, and I was swung round.

"Mr. Ogilvy," he said, the more savagely I doubt not because his passions had been chained so long, "you know more than you would have us think. Beware, sir, of recognising that gypsy should you ever see her again in different attire.

I advise you to have forgotten this night when you waker to-morrow morning."

With a menacing gesture he left me, and I sank into a chair, glad to lose sight of the glowering eyes with which he had pinned me to the wall.

The earl and McKenzie would be some distance still from the hill when the office-bearers had scoured it in vain for their minister. The gypsies, now dancing round their fires to music that, on ordinary occasions, Lang Tammas would have stopped by using his fists to the glory of God, had seen no minister, they said, and disbelieved in the existence of the mysterious Egyptian.

"Liars they are to trade," Spens declared to his companions, "but now and again they speak truth, like a standing clock, and I'm beginning to think the minister's lassie was invented in the square."

"Not so," said the precentor, "for we saw her oursel's a short year syne, and Hendry Munn there allows there's townsfolk that hae passed her in the glen mair recently."

"I only allowed," Hendry said, cautiously, "that some sic talk had shot up sudden-like in the town. Them that pretend they saw her says that she joukt quick out o' sicht."

"Ay, and there's another quirk in that," responded the suspicious precentor.

"I'se uphaud the minister's sitting in the manse in his slippers by this time," Hendry said.

"I'm willing," replied Whamond, "to gang back and speir or to search Caddam next; but let the matter drop I winna though I ken you're a' awid to be hame now."

"And naturally," retorted Tosh, "for the nicht's coming on as black as pick, and by the time we're at Caddam we'll no even see the trees."

Towards Caddam, nevertheless, they advanced, hearing nothing but a distant wind and the whish of their legs in the broom.

"Whaur's John Spens?" Hendry said, suddenly.

They turned back and found Spens rooted to the ground as a boy becomes motionless when he thinks he is within arm's reach of a nest and the bird sitting on the eggs.

"What do you see, man?" Hendry whispered.

"As sure as death," answered Spens, awestruck, "I see a drap o' rain."

"It's no rain we're here to look for," said the precentor.

"Peter Tosh," cried Spens, "it was a drap! Oh, Peter

how are you looking at me so queer, Peter, when you should be thanking the Lord for the promise that's in that drap?"

"Come away," Whamond said, impatiently; but Spens answered, "No till I've offered up a prayer for the promise that's in that drap. Peter Tosh, you've forgotten to take off your bonnet."

"Think twice, John Spens," gasped Tosh, "afore you pray for rain this nicht."

The others thought him crazy, but he went on, with a catch in his voice:

"I felt a drap o' rain mysel', just afore it came on dark so hurried, and my first impulse was to wish that I could carry that drap about wi' me and look at it. But, John Spens, when I looked up I saw sic a change running ower the sky that I thocht hell had ta'en the place o' heaven, and that there was waterspouts gathering therein for the drowning o' the world."

"There's no water in hell," the precentor said, grimly.

"Genesis nine," said Spens, "verses eight to seventeen. Ay, but Peter, you've startled me, and I'm thinking we should be stepping hame. Is that a licht?"

"It'll be in Nanny Webster's," Hendry said, after they had all regarded the light.

"I never heard that Nanny needed a candle to licht her to her bed," the precentor muttered.

"She was awa to meet Sanders the day as he came out o' the Tilliedrum gaol," Spens remembered, "and I daresay the licht means they're hame again."

"It's well kent—" began Hendry, and would have recalled his words.

"Hendry Munn," cried the precentor, "if you hae minded onything that may help us, out wi't."

"I was just minding," the kirk officer answered, reluctantly, "that Nanny allows it's Mr. Dishart that has been keeping her frae the poorhouse. You canna censure him for that, Tammas."

"Can I no?" retorted Whamond. "What business has he to befriend a woman that belongs to another denomination? I'll see to the bottom o' that this nicht. Lads, follow me to Nanny's, and dinna be surprised if we find baith the minister and the Egyptian there."

They had not advanced many yards when Spens jumped to the side, crying, "Be wary, that's no the wind; it's a machine!"

Immediately the doctor's dog-cart was close to them, with Rob Dow for its only occupant. He was driving slowly, or Whamond could not have escaped the horse's hoofs.

"Is that you, Rob Dow?" said the precentor, sourly. "I tell you, you'll be gaoled for stealing the doctor's machine."

"The Hielandman wasna muckle hurt, Rob," Hendry said more good-naturedly.

"I ken that," replied Rob, scowling at the four of them. "What are you doing here on sic a nicht?"

"Do you see anything strange in the nicht, Rob?" Tosh asked, apprehensively.

"It's setting to rain," Dow replied. "I dinna see it, but I feel it."

"Ay," said Tosh, eagerly, "but will it be a saft, cowdie sweet ding-on?"

"Let the heavens open if they will," interposed Spens recklessly. "I would swop the drought for rain, though it comes down in a sheet as in the year twelve."

"And like a sheet it'll come," replied Dow, "and the deil'll blaw it about wi' his biggest bellowses."

Tosh shivered, but Whamond shook him roughly, saying:

"Keep your oaths to yoursel', Rob Dow, and tell me, have you seen Mr. Dishart?"

"I hinna," Rob answered, curtly, preparing to drive on.

"Nor the lassie they call the Egyptian?"

Rob leaped from the dog-cart, crying, "What does that mean?"

"Hands off," said the precentor, retreating from him. "I means that Mr. Dishart neglected the prayer-meeting this nicht to philander after that heathen woman."

"We're no sure o't, Tammas," remonstrated the kirk officer. Dow stood quite still. "I believe Rob kens it's true," Hendry added, sadly, "or he would hae flown at your throat, Tammas Whamond, for saying these words."

Even this did not rouse Dow.

"Rob doesna worship the minister as he used to do," said Spens.

"And what for no?" cried the precentor. "Rob Dow, is it because you've found out about this woman?"

"You're a pack o' liars," roared Rob, desperately, "and if you say again that ony wandering hussy has haud o' the minister, I'll let you see whether I can loup at throats."

"You'll swear by the Book," asked Whamond, relentlessly

"that you've seen neither o' them this nicht, nor them thegither at any time?"

"I so swear by the Book," answered poor, loyal Rob. 'But what makes you look for Mr. Dishart here?" he demanded, with an uneasy look at the light in the mud house.

"Go hame," replied the precentor, "and deliver up the machine you stole, and leave this session to do its duty. John, we maun fathom the meaning o' that licht."

Dow started, and was probably at that moment within an ace of felling Whamond.

"I'll come wi' you," he said, hunting in his mind for a better way of helping Gavin.

They were at Nanny's garden, but in the darkness Whamond could not find the gate. Rob climbed the paling, and was at once lost sight of. Then they saw his head obscure the window. They did not, however, hear the groan that startled Babbie.

"There's nobody there," he said, coming back, "but Nanny and Sanders. You'll mind Sanders was to be freed the day."

"I'll go in and see Sanders," said Hendry, but the precentor pulled him back, saying, "You'll do nothing o' the kind, Hendry Munn; you'll come awa' wi' me now to the manse."

"It's mair than me and Peter'll do, then," said Spens, who had been consulting with the other farmer. "We're gaun as straucht hame as the darkness'll let us."

With few words the session parted, Spens and Tosh setting off for their farms, and Hendry accompanying the precentor. No one will ever know where Dow went. I can fancy him, however, returning to the wood, and there drawing rein. I can fancy his mind made up to watch the mud house until Gavin and the gypsy separated, and then pounce upon her. I daresay his whole plot could be condensed into a sentence. "If she's got rid o' this nicht, we may cheat the session yet." But this is mere surmise. All I know is that he waited near Nanny's house, and by and by heard another trap coming up Windyghoul. That was just before the ten o'clock bell began to ring.

CHAPTER XXX.

LEADING SWIFTLY TO THE APPALLING MARRIAGE.

THE little minister bowed his head in assent when Babbie's cry, "Oh, Gavin, do you?" leapt in front of her unselfish wish that he should care for her no more.

"But that matters very little now," he said.

She was his to do with as he willed; and, perhaps, the joy of knowing herself loved still begot a wild hope that he would refuse to give her up. If so, these words laid it low; but even the sentence they passed upon her could not kill the self-respect that would be hers henceforth. "That matters very little now," the man said, but to the woman it seemed to matter more than anything else in the world.

"We must try to make amends now," he said, gravely, "for the wrong we have done."

"The wrong I have done," she said, correcting him. "You will make it harder for me if you blame yourself. How vile I was in those days!"

"Those days," she called them, they seemed so far away.

"Do not cry, Babbie," Gavin replied, gently. "He knew what you were, and why, and He pities you. 'For His anger endureth but a moment: in His favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.'"

"Not to me."

"Yes, to you," he answered. "Babbie, you will return to the Spittal now, and tell Lord Rintoul everything."

"If you wish it."

"Not because I wish it, but because it is right. He must be told that you do not love him."

"I never pretended to him that I did," Babbie said, looking up. "Oh," she added, with emphasis, "he knows that. He thinks me incapable of caring for any one."

"And that is why he must be told of me," Gavin replied. "You are no longer the woman you were, Babbie, and you know it, and I know it, but he does not know it. He shall know it before he decides whether he is to marry you."

Babbie looked at Gavin, and wondered he did not see that this decision lay with him.

"Nevertheless," she said, "the wedding will take place to

morrow; if it did not, Lord Rintoul would be the scorn of his friends."

"If it does," the minister answered, "he will be the scorn of himself. Babbie, there is a chance."

"There is no chance," she told him. "I shall be back at the Spittal without any one's knowing of my absence, and when I begin to tell him of you. he will tremble, lest it means my refusal to marry him; when he knows it does not, he will wonder only why I told him anything."

"He will ask you to take time—"

"No, he will ask me to put on my wedding dress. You must not think anything else possible."

"So be it, then," Gavin said, firmly.

"Yes, it will be better so," Babbie answered, and then, seeing him misunderstand her meaning, exclaimed, reproachfully, "I was not thinking of myself. In the time to come, whatever be my lot, I shall have the one consolation, that this is best for you. Think of your mother."

"She will love you," Gavin said, "when I tell her of you."

"Yes," said Babbie, wringing her hands; "she will almost love me, but for what? For not marrying you. That is the only reason any one in Thrums will have for wishing me well."

"No others," Gavin answered, "will ever know why I remained unmarried."

"Will you never marry?" Babbie asked, exultingly. "Ah!" she cried, ashamed, "but you must."

"Never."

Babbie believed his "Never," and, doubtless, thought no worse of him for it; but she saw no way of comforting him save by disparagement of herself.

"You must think of your congregation," she said. "A minister with a gypsy wife—"

"Would have knocked them about with a flail," Gavin interposed, showing his teeth at the thought of the precentor, "until they did her reverence."

She shook her head, and told him of her meeting with Micah Dow. It silenced him; not, however, on account of its pathos, as she thought, but because it interpreted the riddle of Rob's behaviour.

"Nevertheless," he said, ultimately, "my duty is not to do what is right in my people's eyes, but what seems right in my own."

Babbie had not heard him.

"I saw a face at the window just now," she whisperee drawing closer to him.

"There was no face there; the very thought of Rob Do raises him before you," Gavin answered, reassuringly, thoug Rob was nearer at that moment than either of them though

"I must go away at once," she said, still with her eyes o the window. "No, no, you shall not come or stay with me it is you who are in danger."

"Do not fear for me."

"I must, if you will not. Before you came in, did I no hear you speak of a meeting you had to attend to-night?"

"My pray—" His teeth met on the word; so abruptly di it conjure up the forgotten prayer-meeting that before th shock could reach his mind he stood motionless, listening fo the bell. For one instant all that had taken place since h last heard it might have happened between two of its tinkles Babbie passed from before him like a figure in a panorama and he saw, instead, a congregation in their pews.

"What do you see?" Babbie cried, in alarm, for he seeme to be gazing at the window.

"Only you," he replied, himself again; "I am coming wit you."

"You must let me go alone," she entreated; "if not fo your own safety"—but it was only him she considered—"the for the sake of Lord Rintoul. Were you and I to be see together now, his name and mine might suffer."

It was an argument the minister could not answer sav by putting his hands over his face; his distress made Babbi strong; she moved to the door, trying to smile.

"Go, Babbie!" Gavin said, controlling his voice, thoug it had been a smile more pitiful than her tears. "God ha you in His keeping; it is not His will to give me this t bear for you."

They were now in the garden.

"Do not think of me as unhappy," she said; "it will b happiness to me to try to be all you would have me be."

He might have kissed her, and perhaps she thought so.

"I am—I am going now, dear," she said, and came bac a step because he did not answer; then she went on, and wa out of his sight at three yards' distance. Neither of the heard the approaching dog-cart.

"You see, I am bearing it quite cheerfully," she said. " shall have everything a woman loves; do not grieve for n so much."

Gavin dared not speak nor move. Never had he found life so hard; but he was fighting with the ignoble in himself, and winning. She opened the gate, and it might have been a signal to the dog-cart to stop. They both heard a dog barking, and then the voice of Lord Rintoul:

"That is a light in the window. Jump down, McKenzie, and inquire."

Gavin took one step nearer Babbie and stopped. He did not see how all her courage went from her, so that her knees yielded, and she held out her arms to him, but he heard a great sob and then his name.

"Gavin, I am afraid."

Gavin understood now, and I say he would have been no man to leave her after that; only a moment was allowed him, and it was their last chance on earth. He took it. His arm went round his beloved, and he drew her away from Nanny's.

McKenzie found both house and garden empty. "And yet," he said, "I swear some one passed the window as we sighted it."

"Waste no more time," cried the impatient earl. "We must be very near the hill now. You will have to lead the horse, McKenzie, in this darkness; the dog may find the way through the broom for us."

"The dog has run on," McKenzie replied, now in an evil temper. "Who knows, it may be with her now? So we must feel our way cautiously; there is no call for capsizing the trap in our haste." But there was call for haste if they were to reach the gypsy encampment before Gavin and Babbie were made man and wife over the tongs.

The Spittal dog-cart rocked as it dragged its way through the broom. Rob Dow followed. The ten o'clock bell began to ring.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHILE THE TEN O'CLOCK BELL WAS RINGING.

"No, no, Davit, Mr. Dishart hadna felt the blow the piper gave him till he ascended the pulpit to conduct the prayer-meeting for rain, and then he fainted awa. Tammas Whamond and Peter Tosh carried him to the session-house. Ay, an awful scene."

"How did the minister no come to the meeting? I wonde how you could expect it, Snecky, and his mother ta'en s suddenly ill; he's at her bedside, but the doctor has littl hope."

"This is what has occurred, Tailor: Mr. Dishart never go the length of the pulpit. He fell in a swound on the vestr floor. What caused it? Oh, nothing but the heat. Thrum is so dry that one spark would set it in a blaze."

"I canna get at the richts o' what keeped him frae th meeting, Femie, but it had something to do wi' an Egyptia on the hill. Very like he had been trying to stop the gyps marriage there. I gaed to the manse to speir at Jean wha was wrang, but I'm thinking I telled her mair than she coul tell me."

"Man, man, Andrew, the wite o't lies wi' Peter Tosh. H thocht we was to hae sic a terrible rain that he implored th minister no to pray for it, and so angry was Mr. Dishar that he ordered the whole session out o' the kirk. I sa them in Couthie's close, and michty dour they looked."

"Yes, as sure as death, Tammas Whamond locked the kir door in Mr. Dishart's face."

"I'm a' shaking! And small wonder, Marget, when I'v heard this minute that Mr. Dishart's been struck by lichtnin while looking for Rob Dow. He's no killed, but, woe's me They say he'll never preach again."

"Nothing o' the kind. It was Rob that the lichtning struc dead in the doctor's machine. The horse wasna touched; came tearing down the Roods wi' the corpse sitting in th machine like a living man."

"What are you listening to, woman? Is it to a dog bar ing? I've heard it this while, but it's far awa."

In the manse kitchen

"Jean, did you not hear me ring? I want you to— Wh are you staring out at the window, Jean?"

"I—I was just hearkening to the ten o'clock bell, ma'am

"I never saw you doing nothing before! Put the heat in the fire, Jean. I want to iron the minister's neck-cloth The prayer-meeting is long in coming out, is it not?"

"The—the drouth, ma'am, has been so cruel hard."

"And, to my shame, I am so comfortable that I almo forgot how others are suffering. But my son never forge Jean. You are not crying, are you?"

"No, ma'am."

"Bring the iron to the parlour, then. And if the minis—Why did you start, Jean? I only heard a dog barking."

"I thocht, ma'am—at first I thocht it was Mr. Dishart opening the door. Ay, it's just a dog; some gypsy dog on the hill, I'm thinking, for sound would carry far the nicht."

"Even you, Jean, are nervous at nights, I see, if there is no man in the house. We shall hear no more distant dogs barking, I warrant, when the minister comes home."

"When he comes home, ma'am."

On the middle of a hill—a man and a woman

"Courage, beloved; we are nearly there."

"But, Gavin, I cannot see the encampment."

"The night is too dark."

"But the gypsy fires?"

"They are in the Toad's-hole."

"Listen to that dog barking."

"There are several dogs at the encampment, Babbie."

"There is one behind us. See, there it is!"

"I have driven it away, dear. You are trembling."

"What we are doing frightens me, Gavin. It is at your heels again!"

"It seems to know you."

"Oh, Gavin, it is Lord Rintoul's collie, Snap. It will bite you."

"No, I have driven it back again. Probably the earl is following us."

"Gavin, I cannot go on with this."

"Quicker, Babbie."

"Leave me, dear, and save yourself."

"Lean on me, Babbie."

"Oh, Gavin, is there no way but this?"

"No sure way."

"Even though we are married to-night—"

"We shall be married in five minutes, and then, whatever befall, he cannot have you."

"But after?"

"I will take you straight to the manse, to my mother."

"Were it not for that dog, I should think we were alone on the hill."

"But we are not. See, there are the gypsy fires."

On the west side of the hill—two figures

"Tammas, Tammas Whamond, I've lost you. Should w gang to the manse down the fields?"

"Wheesht, Hendry!"

"What are you listening for?"

"I heard a dog barking."

"Only a gypsy dog, Tammas, barking at the coming storm

"The gypsy dogs are all tied up, and this one's atwee us and the Toad's-hole. What was that?"

"It was nothing but the rubbing of the branches in th cemetery on ane another. It's said, trees mak' that fea some sound when they're terrified."

"It was a dog barking at somebody that's stoning it. ken that sound, Hendry Munn."

"May I die the death, Tammas Whamond, if a great dra o' rain didna strike me the now, and I swear it was warr I'm for running hame."

"I'm for seeing who drove awa that dog. Come back w me, Hendry."

"I winna. There's no a soul on the hill but you an me and thae daffing and drinking gypsies. How do you r answer me, Tammas? Hie, Tammas Whamond, whaur a you? He's gone! Ay, then I'll mak' tracks hame."

In the broom—a dog-cart

"Do you see nothing yet, McKenzie?"

"Scarce the broom at my knees, Rintoul. There is not light on the hill."

"McKenzie, can that schoolmaster have deceived us?"

"It is probable."

"Urge on the horse, however. There is a road throug the broom, I know. Have we stuck again?"

"Rintoul, she is not here. I promised to help you to brin her back to the Spittal before this escapade became know but we have failed to find her. If she is to be saved, it mu be by herself. I daresay she has returned already. Let m turn the horse's head. There is a storm brewing."

"I will search this gypsy encampment first, if it is on th hill. Hark! that was a dog's bark. Yes, it is Snap; but h would not bark at nothing. Why do you look behind you s often, McKenzie?"

"For some time, Rintoul, it has seemed to me that we are being followed. Listen!"

"I hear nothing. At last, McKenzie, at last, we are out of the broom."

"And as I live, Rintoul, I see the gypsy lights!"

It might have been a lantern that was flashed across the hill. Then all that part of the world went suddenly on fire. Everything was horribly distinct in that white light. The firs of Caddam were so near that it seemed to have arrested them in a silent march upon the hill. The grass would not hide a pebble. The ground was scored with shadows of men and things. Twice the light flickered and recovered itself. A red serpent shot across it, and then again black night fell.

The hill had been illumined thus for nearly half a minute. During that time not even a dog stirred. The shadows of human beings lay on the ground as motionless as logs. What had been revealed seemed less a gypsy marriage than a picture. Or was it that during the ceremony every person on the hill had been turned into stone? The gypsy king, with his arm upraised, had not had time to let it fall. The men and women behind him had their mouths open, as if struck when on the point of calling out. Lord Rintoul had risen in the dog-cart and was leaning forward. One of McKenzie's feet was on the shaft. The man crouching in the dog-cart's wake had flung up his hands to protect his face. The precentor, his neck outstretched, had a hand on each knee. All eyes were fixed, as in the death glare, on Gavin and Babbie, who stood before the king, their hands clasped over the tongs. Fear was petrified on the woman's face, determination on the man's.

They were all released by the crack of the thunder, but for another moment none could have swaggered.

"That was Lord Rintoul in the dog-cart," Babbie whispered, drawing in her breath.

"Yes, dear." Gavin answered. resolutely, "and now is the time for me to have my first and last talk with him. Remain here, Babbie. Do not move till I come back."

"But, Gavin, he has seen. I fear him still."

"He cannot touch you now, Babbie. You are my wife."

In the vivid light Gavin had thought the dog-cart much nearer than it was. He called Lord Rintoul's name, but got no answer. There were shouts behind, gypsies running from

the coming rain, dogs whining, but silence in front. Th minister moved on some paces. Away to the left he hear voices:

"Who was the man, McKenzie?"

"My lord, I have lost sight of you. This is not the wa to the camp."

"Tell me, McKenzie, that you did not see what I saw."

"Rintoul, I beseech you to turn back. We are too late."

"We are not too late."

Gavin broke through the darkness between them and hin but they were gone. He called to them, and stopped to liste to their feet.

"Is that you, Gavin?" Babbie asked just then.

For reply, the man who had crept up to her clapped h hand upon her mouth. Only the beginning of a screa escaped from her. A strong arm drove her quickly southl ward.

Gavin heard her cry, and ran back to the encampmen Babbie was gone. None of the gypsies had seen her sinc the darkness came back. He rushed hither and thither with torch that only showed his distracted face to others. H flung up his arms in appeal for another moment of light; the he heard Babbie scream again, and this time it was from distance. He dashed after her; he heard a trap speedin down the greensward through the broom.

Lord Rintoul had kidnapped Babbie. Gavin had no othe thought as he ran after the dog-cart from which the cry ha come. The earl's dog followed him, snapping at his heel The rain began.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE GREAT RAIN.

GAVIN passed on through Windyghoul, thinking in h frenzy that he still heard the trap. In a rain that came dow like iron rods every other sound was beaten dead. He slippe and before he could regain his feet the dog bit him. T protect himself from dykes and trees and other horrors the darkness he held his arm before him, but soon it w driven to his side. Wet whips cut his brow so that he ha to protect it with his hands, until it had to bear the la

again, for they would not. Now he had forced up his knees, and would have succumbed but for a dread of being pinned to the earth. This fight between the man and the rain went on all night, and long before it ended the man was past the power of thinking.

In the ringing of the ten o'clock bell Gavin had lived the seventh part of a man's natural life. Only action was required of him. That accomplished, his mind had begun to work again, when suddenly the loss of Babbie stopped it, as we may put out a fire with a great coal. The last thing he had reflected about was a dog-cart in motion, and, consequently, this idea clung to him. His church, his mother, were lost knowledge of, but still he seemed to hear the trap in front.

By and by even the vision of Babbie in the dog-cart was blotted out. If nothing had taken its place, he would not have gone on probably; and had he turned back objectless, his strength would have succumbed to the rain. Now he saw Babbie and Rintoul being married by a minister who was himself, and there was a fair company looking on, and always when he was on the point of shouting to himself, whom he could see clearly, that this woman was already married, the rain obscured his words and the light went out. Presently the ceremony began again, always to stop at the same point. He saw it in the lightning flash that had startled the hill. It gave him courage to fight his way onward, because he thought he must be heard if he could draw nearer to the company.

A regiment of cavalry began to trouble him. He heard it advancing from the Spittal, but was not dismayed, for it was, as yet, far distant. The horsemen came thundering on, filling the whole glen of Quharity. Now he knew that they had been sent out to ride him down. He paused in dread, until they had swept past him. They came back to look for him, riding more furiously than ever, and always missed him, yet his fears of the next time were not lessened. They were only the rain.

All through the night the dog followed him. He would forget it for a time, and then it would be so close that he could see it dimly. He never heard it bark, but it snapped at him, and a grin had become the expression of its face. He stoned it, he even flung himself at it, he addressed it in caressing tones, and always with the result that it disappeared, to come back presently.

He found himself walking in a lake, and now even th instinct of self-preservation must have been flickering, fo he waded on, rejoicing merely in getting rid of the do Something in the water rose, and struck him. Instead o stupefying him, the blow brought him to his senses, and h struggled for his life. The ground slipped beneath his fe many times, but at last he was out of the water. That h was out in a flood he did not realise; yet he now acted lik one in full possession of his faculties. When his feet sank in water, he drew back; and many times he sought shelte behind banks and rocks, first testing their firmness with h hands. Once a torrent of stones, earth, and heather carrie him down a hillside, until he struck against a tree. H twined his arms round it, and had just done so when it fe with him. After that, when he touched trees growing i water, he fled from them, thus probably saving himself fro death.

The daylight would not come. He longed passionately fo it. He tried to remember what it was like, and could no he had been blind so long. It was away in front some where, and he was struggling to overtake it. He expecte to see it from a dark place, when he would rush forwar to bathe his arms in it, and then the elements that wer searching the world for him would see him, and he woul perish. But death did not seem too great a penalty to pay fo light.

And at last day did come back, gray and drear. He sa suddenly once more. I think he must have been wanderin the glen with his eyes shut, as one does shut them involun tarily against the hidden dangers of black night. How diffe ent was daylight from what he had expected! He looke and then shut his dazed eyes again, for the darkness was le horrible than the day. Had he indeed seen, or only dreame that he saw? Once more he looked to see what the wor was like; and the sight that met his eyes was so mournf that he, who had fought through the long night, now sa hopeless and helpless among the heather. The dog was n far away, and it, too, lost heart. Gavin held out his han and Snap crept timidly towards him. He unloosened h coat, and the dog nestled against him, cowed and shiverin hiding its head from the day. Thus they lay, and the ra beat upon them.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE GLEN AT BREAK OF DAY.

My first intimation that the burns were in flood came from Waster Lunny, close on the strike of ten o'clock. This was some minutes before they had any rain in Thrums. I was in the schoolhouse, now piecing together the puzzle Lord Rintoul had left with me, and anon starting upright as McKenzie's hand seemed to tighten on my arm. Waster Lunny had been whistling to me (with his fingers in his mouth) for some time before I heard him and hurried out. I was surprised and pleased, knowing no better, to be met on the threshold by a whisk of rain.

The night was not then so dark but that when I reached the Quharity I could see the farmer take shape on the other side of it. He wanted me to exult with him, I thought, in the end of the drouth, and I shouted that I would fling him the stilts.

"It's yoursel' that wants them," he answered, excitedly, "if you're fleid to be left alone in the schoolhouse the nicht. Do you hear me, dominie? There has been frichtsome rain among the hills, and the Bog burn is coming down like a sea. It has carried awa the miller's brig, and the steading o' Muckle Pirley is standing three feet in water."

"You're dreaming, man," I roared back, but beside his news he held my doubts of no account.

"The Retery's in flood," he went on, "and running wild through Hazel Wood; T'nowdunnie's tattie field's out o' sicht, and at the Kirkton they're fleid they've lost twa kye."

"There has been no rain here," I stammered, incredulously.

"It's coming now," he replied. "And listen: the story's out that the Backbone has fallen into the loch. You had better cross, dominie, and thole out the nicht wi' us."

The Backbone was a piece of mountainside overhanging a loch among the hills, and legend said that it would one day fall forward and squirt all the water into the glen. Something of the kind had happened, but I did not believe it then; with little wit I pointed to the shallow Quharity.

"It may come down at any minute," the farmer answered, "and syne, mind you, you'll be five miles frae Waster Lunny, for there'll be no crossing but by the Brig o' March. If you winna come, I maun awa back. I mauna bide langer on

the wrang side o' the Moss ditch, though it has been as dry this month back as a rabbit's roady. But if you—" His voice changed. "God's sake, man," he cried, "you're ower late. Look at that! Dinna look—run, run!"

If I had not run before he bade me, I might never have run again on earth. I had seen a great shadowy yellow river come riding down the Quharity. I sprang from it for my life; and when next I looked behind, it was upon a turbulent loch, the further bank lost in darkness. I was about to shout to Waster Lunny, when a monster rose in the torrent between me and the spot where he had stood. It frightened me to silence until it fell, when I knew it was but a tree that had been flung on end by the flood. For a time there was no answer to my cries, and I thought the farmer had been swept away. Then I heard his whistle, and back I ran recklessly through the thickening darkness to the schoolhouse.

The schoolhouse stands too high to fear any flood, but there were moments when I thought the rain would master it. Not only the windows and the roof were rattling then, but all the walls, and I was like one in a great drum. When the rain was doing its utmost, I heard no other sound; but when the lull came, there was the wash of a heavy river, or a crack as of artillery that told of landslips, or the plaintive cry of the peesweep as it rose in the air, trying to entice the waters away from its nest.

It was a dreary scene that met my gaze at break of day. Already the Quharity had risen six feet, and in many parts of the glen it was two hundred yards wide. Waster Lunny's corn field looked like a bog grown over with rushes, and what had been his turnips had become a lake with small islands in it. No dyke stood whole except one that the farmer, unaided, had built in a straight line from the road to the top of Mount Bare, and my own, the further end of which dipped in water. Of the plot of firs planted fifty years earlier to help on Waster Lunny's crops, only a triangle had withstood the night.

Even with the aid of my field-glass I could not estimate the damage on more distant farms, for the rain, though now thin and soft, as it continued for six days, was still heavy and of a brown colour. After breakfast,—which was interrupted by my bantam cock's twice spilling my milk,—I saw Waster Lunny and his son, Matthew, running towards the shepherd's house with ropes in their hands. The house, I thought, must be in the mist beyond and then I sickened

knowing all at once that it should be on this side of the mist. When I had nerve to look again, I saw, that though the roof had fallen in, the shepherd was astride one of the walls, from which he was dragged presently through the water by the help of the ropes. I remember noticing that he returned to his house with the rope still about him, and concluded that he had gone back to save some of his furniture. I was wrong, however. There was too much to be done at the farm to allow this, but Waster Lunny had consented to Duncan's forcing his way back to the shieling to stop the clock. To both men it seemed horrible to let a clock go on ticking in a deserted house.

Having seen this rescue accomplished, I was letting my glass roam in the opposite direction, when one of its shakes brought into view something on my own side of the river. I looked at it long, and saw it move slightly. Was it a human being? No, it was a dog. No, it was a dog and something else. I hurried out to see more clearly, and after a first glance the glass shook so in my hands that I had to rest it on the dyke. For a full minute, I daresay, did I look through the glass without blinking, and then I needed to look no more. That black patch was, indeed, Gavin.

He lay quite near the schoolhouse, but I had to make a circuit of half a mile to reach him. It was pitiful to see the dog doing its best to come to me, and falling every few steps. The poor brute was discoloured almost beyond recognition; and when at last it reached me, it lay down at my feet and licked them. I stepped over it and ran on recklessly to Gavin. At first I thought he was dead. If tears rolled down my cheeks, they were not for him.

I was no strong man, even in those days, but I carried him to the schoolhouse, the dog crawling after us. Gavin I put upon my bed, and I lay down beside him, holding him close to me, that some of the heat of my body might be taken in by his. When he was able to look at me, however, it was not with understanding, and in vain did my anxiety press him with questions. Only now and again would some word in my speech strike upon his brain and produce at least an echo. To "Did you meet Lord Rintoul's dog-cart?" he sat up, saying, quickly:

"Listen, the dog-cart!"

"Egyptian" was not that forenoon among the words he knew, and I did not think of mentioning "hill." At "rain" he shivered; but "Spittal" was what told me most.

"He has taken her back," he replied, at once, from which I learned that Gavin now knew as much of Babbie as I did.

I made him as comfortable as possible, and, despairing of learning anything from him in his present state, I let him sleep. Then I went out into the rain, very anxious, and dreading what he might have to tell me when he woke. I waded and jumped my way as near to the farm as I dared go, and Waster Lunny, seeing me, came to the water's edge. At this part the breadth of the flood was not forty yards, yet for a time our voices could no more cross its roar than one may send a snowball through a stone wall. I know not whether the river then quieted for a space, or if it was only that the ears grow used to dins as the eyes distinguish the objects in a room that is at first black to them; but after a little we were able to shout our remarks across, much as boys fling pebbles, many to fall into the water, but one occasionally to reach the other side. Waster Lunny would have talked of the flood, but I had not come here for that.

"How were you home so early from the prayer-meeting last night?" I bawled.

"No meeting . . . I came straucht hame . . . but terrible stories . . . Mr. Dishart," was all I caught after Waster Lunny had flung his words across a dozen times.

I could not decide whether it would be wise to tell him that Gavin was in the schoolhouse, and while I hesitated, he continued to shout:

"Some woman . . . the session . . . Lang Tammas . . . God forbid . . . maun back to the farm . . . byre running like a mill-dam."

He signed to me that he must be off, but my signals delayed him, and after much trouble he got my question, "Any news about Lord Rintoul?" My curiosity about the earl must have surprised him, but he answered:

"Marriage is to be the day . . . cannon."

I signed that I did not grasp his meaning.

"A cannon is to be fired as soon as they're man and wife," he bellowed. "We'll hear it."

With that we parted. On my way home, I remember, I stepped on a brood of drowned partridge. I was only out half an hour, but I had to wring my clothes as if they were fresh from the tub.

The day wore on, and I did not disturb the sleeper. A dozen times, I suppose, I had to relight my fire of wet peat and roots; but I had plenty of time to stare out at the window

plenty of time to think. Probably Gavin's life depended on his sleeping, but that was not what kept my hands off him. Knowing so little of what had happened in Thrums since I left it, I was forced to guess, and my conclusion was that the earl had gone off with his own, and that Gavin in a frenzy had followed them. My wisest course, I thought, was to let him sleep until I heard the cannon, when his struggle for a wife must end. Fifty times at least did I stand regarding him as he slept; and if I did not pity his plight sufficiently, you know the reason. What were Margaret's sufferings at this moment? Was she wringing her hands for her son lost in the flood, her son in disgrace with the congregation? By one o'clock no cannon had sounded, and my suspense had become intolerable. I shook Gavin awake, and even as I shook him demanded a knowledge of all that had happened since we parted at Nanny's gate.

"How long ago is that?" he asked, with bewilderment.

"It was last night," I answered. "This morning I found you senseless on the hillside, and brought you here, to the Glen Quharity schoolhouse. That dog was with you."

He looked at the dog, but I kept my eyes on him, and I saw intelligence creep back, like a blush, into his face.

"Now I remember," he said, shuddering. "You have proved yourself my friend, sir, twice in the four and twenty hours."

"Only once, I fear," I replied, gloomily. "I was no friend when I sent you to the earl's bride last night."

"You know who she is?" he cried, clutching me, and finding it agony to move his limbs.

"I know now," I said, and had to tell him how I knew before he would answer another question. Then I became listener, and you who read know to what alarming story.

"And all that time," I cried, reproachfully, when he had done, "you gave your mother not a thought."

"Not a thought," he answered; and I saw that he pronounced a harsher sentence on himself than could have come from me. "All that time!" he repeated, after a moment. "It was only a few minutes, while the ten o'clock bell was ringing."

"Only a few minutes," I said, "but they changed the channel of the Quharity, and perhaps they have done not less to you."

"That may be," he answered, gravely, "but it is of the present I must think just now. Mr. Ogilvy, what assurance

have I, while lying here helpless, that the marriage at th Spittal is not going on?"

"None, I hope," I said to myself, and listened longing for the cannon. But to him I only pointed out that n woman need go through a form of marriage against her wi

"Rintoul carried her off with no possible purport," h said, "but to set my marriage at defiance, and she has had conviction always that to marry me would be to ruin me. was only in the shiver Lord Rintoul's voice in the darkne sent through her that she yielded to my wishes. If sh thought that marriage last night could be annulled by anoth to-day, she would consent to the second, I believe, to sa me from the effects of the first. You are incredulous, si but you do not know of what sacrifices love is capable."

Something of that I knew, but I did not tell him. I ha seen from his manner rather than his words that he doubt the validity of the gypsy marriage, which the king had on consented to celebrate because Babbie was herself an Egy tian. The ceremony had been interrupted in the middle.

"It was no marriage," I said, with a confidence I was f from feeling.

"In the sight of God," he replied, excitedly, "we took ea other for man and wife."

I had to hold him down in bed.

"You are too weak to stand, man," I said, "and yet y think you could start off this minute for the Spittal."

"I must go," he cried. "She is my wife. That impio marriage may have taken place already."

"Oh, that it had!" was my prayer. "It has not," I sa to him. "A cannon is to be fired immediately after the cer mony, and all the glen will hear it."

I spoke on the impulse, thinking to allay his desire be off; but he said, "Then I may yet be in time." Somewh cruelly I let him rise, that he might realise his weakne Every bone in him cried out at his first step, and he sa into a chair.

"You will go to the Spittal for me?" he implored.

"I will not," I told him. "You are asking me to flin away my life."

To prove my words I opened the door, and he saw wh the flood was doing. Nevertheless, he rose and tottered se eral times across the room, trying to revive his streng Though every bit of him was aching, I saw that he wo make the attempt.

"Listen to me," I said. "Lord Rintoul can maintain with some reason that it was you rather than he who abducted Babbie. Nevertheless, there will not, I am convinced, be any marriage at the Spittal to-day. When he carried her off from the Toad's-hole, he acted under impulses not dissimilar to those that took you to it. Then, I doubt not, he thought possession was all the law, but that scene on the hill has staggered him by this morning. Even though she thinks to save you by marrying him, he will defer his wedding until he learns the import of yours."

I did not believe in my own reasoning, but I would have said anything to detain him until that cannon was fired. He seemed to read my purpose, for he pushed my arguments from him with his hands, and continued to walk painfully to and fro.

"To defer the wedding," he said, "would be to tell all his friends of her gypsy origin, and of me. He will risk much to avoid that."

"In any case," I answered, "you must now give some thought to those you have forgotten, your mother and your church."

"That must come afterwards," he said, firmly. "My first duty is to my wife."

The door swung to sharply, just then, and he started. He thought it was the cannon.

"I wish to God it had been!" I cried, interpreting his thoughts.

"Why do you wish me ill?" he asked.

"Mr. Dishart," I said, solemnly, rising and facing him, and disregarding his question, "if that woman is to be your wife, it will be at a cost you cannot estimate till you return to Thrums. Do you think that if your congregation knew of this gypsy marriage they would have you for their minister for another day? Do you enjoy the prospect of taking one who might be an earl's wife into poverty—ay, and disgraceful poverty? Do you know your mother so little as to think she could survive your shame? Let me warn you, sir, of what I see. I see another minister in the Auld Licht kirk, I see you and your wife stoned through our wynds, stoned from Thrums, as malefactors have been chased out of it ere now; and as certainly as I see these things I see a hearse standing at the manse door, and stern men denying your son's right to help to carry his mother's coffin to it. Go your way, sir; but first count the cost."

His face quivered before these blows, but all he said wa
"I must dree my dreed."

"God is merciful," I went on, "and these things need n
be. He is more merciful to you, sir, than to some, for t
storm that He sent to save you is ruining them. And y
the farmers are to-day thanking Him for every pound
wool, every blade of corn He has left them, while you tu
from Him because He would save you, not in your way, b
in His. It was His hand that stayed your marriage. I
meant Babbie for the earl; and if it is on her part a lovele
match, she only suffers for her own sins. Of that scene
the hill no one in Thrums, or in the glen, need ever kno
Rintoul will see to it that the gypsies vanish from these pa
for ever, and you may be sure the Spittal will soon be sl
up. He and McKenzie have as much reason as yourself
be silent. You, sir, must go back to your congregation, w
have heard as yet only vague rumours that your presence w
dispel. Even your mother will remain ignorant of what h
happened. Your absence from the prayer-meeting you c
leave to me to explain."

He was so silent that I thought him mine, but his fi
words undeceived me.

"I thought I had nowhere so keen a friend," he said; "b
Mr. Ogilvy, it is devil's work you are pleading. Am I
return to my people to act a living lie before them
the end of my days? Do you really think that G
devastated a glen to give me a chance of becoming a villai
No, sir, I am in His hands, and I will do what I th
right."

"You will be dishonoured," I said, "in the sight of G
and man."

"Not in God's sight," he replied. "It was a sinless m
riage, Mr. Ogilvy, and I do not regret it. God ordained t
she and I should love each other, and He put it into my po
to save her from that man. I took her as my wife bef
Him, and in His eyes I am her husband. Knowing that,
how could I return to Thrums without her?"

I had no answer ready for him. I knew that in my gr
for Margaret I had been advocating an unworthy course,
I would not say so. I went gloomily to the door, and th
presently, his hand fell on my shoulder.

"Your advice came too late, at any rate," he said. "Y
forget that the precentor was on the hill and saw eve
thing."

It was he who had forgotten to tell me this, and to me it was the most direful news of all.

"My God!" I cried. "He will have gone to your mother and told her." And straightway I began to lace my boots.

"Where are you going?" he asked, staring at me.

"To Thrums," I answered, harshly.

"You said that to venture out into the glen was to court death," he reminded me.

"What of that?" I said, and hastily put on my coat.

"Mr. Ogilvy," he cried, "I will not allow you to do this for me."

"For you?" I said, bitterly. "It is not for you."

I would have gone at once, but he got in front of me, asking, "Did you ever know my mother?"

"Long ago," I answered, shortly, and he said no more, thinking, I suppose, that he knew all. He limped to the door with me, and I had only advanced a few steps when I understood better than before what were the dangers I was to venture into. Since I spoke to Waster Lunny the river had risen several feet, and even the hillocks in his turnip field were now submerged. The mist was creeping down the hills. But what warned me most sharply that the flood was not satisfied yet was the top of the schoolhouse dyke; it was lined with field-mice. I turned back, and Gavin, mistaking my meaning, said I did wisely.

"I have not changed my mind," I told him, and then had some difficulty in continuing. "I expect," I said, "to reach Thrums safely, even though I should be caught in the mist, but I shall have to go round by the Kelpie brig in order to get across the river, and it is possible that—that something may befall me."

I have all my life been something of a coward, and my voice shook when I said this, so that Gavin again entreated me to remain at the schoolhouse, saying that if I did not he would accompany me.

"And so increase my danger tenfold?" I pointed out. "No, no, Mr. Dishart, I go alone; and if I can do nothing with the congregation, I can at least send your mother word that you still live. But if anything should happen to me, I want you—"

But I could not say what I had come back to say. I had meant to ask him, in the event of my death, to take a hundred pounds which were the savings of my life; but now I saw that this might lead to Margaret's hearing of me, and

so I stayed my words. It was bitter to me this, and ye after all, a little thing when put beside the rest.

"Good-bye, Mr. Dishart," I said, abruptly. I then looke at my desk, which contained some trifles that were once Ma garet's. "Should anything happen to me," I said, "I wa that old desk to be destroyed unopened."

"Mr. Ogilvy," he answered, gently, "you are venturing th because you loved my mother. If anything does befall yo be assured that I will tell her what you attempted for h sake."

I believe he thought it was to make some such reque that I had turned back.

"You must tell her nothing about me," I exclaimed, consternation. "Swear that my name will never cross yo lips before her. No, that is not enough. You must forg me utterly whether I live or die, lest sometime you shou think of me and she should read your thoughts. Swea man!"

"Must this be?" he said, gazing at me.

"Yes," I answered, more calmly, "it must be. For near a score of years I have been blotted out of your mothe life, and since she came to Thrums my one care has be to keep my existence from her. I have changed my buryin ground even from Thrums to the glen lest I should die befo her, and she, seeing the hearse go by the Tenements, mig ask, 'Whose funeral is this?'"

In my anxiety to warn him, I had said too much. I face grew haggard, and there was fear to speak on it; a I saw, I knew, that some damnable suspicion of Margaret

"She was my wife!" I cried, sharply. "We were ma ried by the minister of Harvie. You are my son."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

STORY OF THE DOMINIE.

When I spoke next, I was back in the schoolhouse, sitti there with my bonnet on my head, Gavin looking at me. V had forgotten the cannon at last.

In that chair I had anticipated this scene more than on of late. I had seen that a time might come when Ga would have to be told all, and I had even said the wo

aloud, as if he were indeed opposite me. So now I was only repeating the tale, and I could tell it without emotion, because it was nigh nineteen years old; and I did not look at Gavin, for I knew that his manner of taking it could bring no change to me.

"Did you never ask your mother," I said, addressing the fire rather than him, "why you were called Gavin?"

"Yes," he answered, "it was because she thought Gavin a prettier name than Adam."

"No," I said, slowly, "it was because Gavin is my name. You were called after your father. Do you not remember my taking you one day to the shore at Harvie to see the fishermen carried to their boats upon their wives' backs, that they might start dry on their journey?"

"No," he had to reply. "I remember the women carrying the men through the water to the boats, but I thought it was my father who—I mean—"

"I know whom you mean," I said. "That was our last day together, but you were not three years old. Yet you remembered me when you came to Thrums. You shake your head, but it is true. Between the diets of worship that first Sabbath I was introduced to you, and you must have had some shadowy recollection of my face, for you asked, 'Surely I saw you in church in the forenoon, Mr. Ogilvy?' I said, 'Yes,' but I had not been in the church in the forenoon. You have forgotten even that, and yet I treasured it."

I could hear that he was growing impatient, though so far he had been more indulgent than I had any right to expect.

"It can all be put into a sentence," I said, calmly. "Margaret married Adam Dishart, and afterwards, believing herself a widow, she married me. You were born, and then Adam Dishart came back."

That is my whole story, and here was I telling it to my son, and not a tear between us. It ended abruptly, and I fell to mending the fire.

"When I knew your mother first," I went on, after Gavin had said some boyish things that were of no avail to me, I did not think to end my days as a dominie. I was a student at Aberdeen, with the ministry in my eye, and sometimes on Saturdays I walked forty miles to Harvie to go to church with her. She had another lover, Adam Dishart, a sailor turned fisherman; and while I lingered at corners, wondering if I could dare to meet her and her mother on their way

to church, he would walk past with them. He was accom panied always by a lanky black dog, which he had brough from a foreign country. He never signed for any ship witl out first getting permission to take it with him, and in Harv they said it did not know the language of the native dog I have never known a man and dog so attached to eac other."

"I remember that black dog," Gavin said. "I have spoke of it to my mother, and she shuddered, as if it had ons bitten her."

"While Adam strutted by with them," I continued, "I wou hang back, raging at his assurance or my own timidity: b I lost my next chance in the same way. In Margaret presence something came over me, a kind of dryness in th throat that made me dumb. I have known divinity studen stricken in the same way, just as they were giving out the first text. It is no aid in getting a kirk or wooing a woma

"If any one in Harvie recalls me now, it is as a hobbled hoy who strode along the cliffs, shouting Homer at the se mews. With all my learning, I, who gave Margaret t name of Lalage, understood women less than any fisherma who bandied words with them across a boat. I remember Yule night when both Adam and I were at her mother's co tage, and as we were leaving, he had the audacity to ki Margaret. She ran out of the room, and Adam swagger off, and, when I recovered from my horror, I apologised f what he had done. I shall never forget how her moth looked at me, and said, 'Ay, Gavin, I see they dinna tea everything at Aberdeen.' You will not believe it, but walked away doubting her meaning. I thought more scholarship then than I do now. Adam Dishart taught its proper place.

"Well, that is the dull man I was; and yet, though Ada was always saying and doing the things I was making my mind to say and do, I think Margaret cared more f me. Nevertheless, there was something about him that women seemed to find lovable, a dash that made them se him away, and then well-nigh run after him. At any ra I could have got her after her mother's death if I had be half a man. But I went back to Aberdeen to write a po about her, and while I was at it Adam married her."

I opened my desk, and took from it a yellow manuscri "Here," I said, "is the poem. You see, I never finished i I was fingering the thing grimly when Gavin's eye

n something else in the desk. It was an ungainly clasp-knife, as rusty as if it had spent a winter beneath a hedge.

"I seem to remember that knife," he said.

"Yes," I answered, "you should remember it. Well, after three months Adam tired of his wife."

I stopped again. This was a story in which only the pauses were eloquent.

"Perhaps I have no right to say he tired of her. One day, however, he sauntered away from Harvie whistling, his dog at his heels as ever, and was not seen again for nearly six years. When I heard of his disappearance I packed my books in that kist, and went to Harvie, where I opened a school. You see, every one but Margaret believed that Adam had fallen over the cliffs and been drowned."

"But the dog?" said Gavin.

"We were all sure that, if he had fallen over, it had jumped after him. The fisher-folk said that he could have left his shadow behind as easily as it. Yet Margaret thought for long that he had tired of Harvie merely and gone back to sea, and not until two years had passed would she marry me. We lived in Adam's house. It was so near the little school that when I opened the window in summer-time she could hear the drone of our voices. During the weeks before you were born I kept that window open all day long, and often I went to it and waved my hand to her.

"Sometimes, when she was washing or baking, I brought you to the school. The only quarrel she and I ever had was about my teaching you the Lord's Prayer in Greek as soon as you could say father and mother. It was to be a surprise for her on your second birthday. On that day, while she was ironing, you took hold of her gown to steady yourself, and began, 'Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς,' and to me, behind the door, it was music. But at ἁγιασθήτω, of which you made two syllables, you cried, and Margaret snatched you up, thinking this was some new ailment. After I had explained to her that it was the Lord's Prayer in Greek, she would let me take you to the schoolhouse no more.

"Not much longer could I have taken you in any case, for already we are at the day when Adam Dishart came back. It was the seventh of September, and all the week most of the women in Harvie had been setting off at dawn to the harvest fields and straggling home at nights, merry and with yellow corn in their hair. I had sat on in the schoolhouse that day after my pupils were gone. I still meant to be a

minister, and I was studying Hebrew, and so absorbed my book that, as the daylight went, I followed it step by st as far as my window, and there I read, without knowir until I chanced to look up, that I had left my desk. I ha not opened that book since.

"From the window I saw you on the waste ground th separated the school from our home. You were coming me on your hands and feet, and stopping now and again look back at your mother, who was at the door, laughing a shaking her fist at you. I beckoned to you, and took the bo back to my desk to lock it up. While my head was inside t desk I heard the schoolhouse door pushed open, and thir ing it was you I smiled, without looking up. Then somethi touched my hand, and I still thought it was you; but I look down, and I saw Adam Dishart's black dog.

"I did not move. It looked up at me and wagged its t Then it drew back,—I suppose because I had no words f it. I watched it run half round the room and stop and lo at me again. Then it slunk out.

"All that time one of my hands had been holding the de open. Now the lid fell. I put on my bonnet and went the door. You were only a few yards away, with flowe in your fist. Margaret was laughing still. I walked rou the school and there was no dog visible. Margaret nodd to me, meaning that I should bring you home. You thr the flowers into my hand, but they fell. I stood there, daz

"I think I walked with you some way across the wa ground. Then I dropped your hand and strode back to t school. I went down on my knees, looking for marks of dog's paws, and I found them.

"When I came out again your mother was no longer at c door, and you were crying because I had left you. I pass you and walked straight to the house. Margaret was sk ning rushes for wicks. There must have been fear in face, for as soon as she saw it she ran to the door to see you were still alive. She brought you in with her, and had strength to cry, 'What is it? Speak!'

" 'Come away,' I said, 'come away,' and I was drawing to the door, but she pressed me into a chair. I was up ag at once.

" 'Margaret,' I said, 'ask no questions. Put on your bon give me the boy, and let us away.'

"I could not take my eyes off the door, and she was walk to it to look out when I barred the way with my arm.

"'What have you seen?' she cried; and then, as I only pointed to her bonnet, she turned to you, and you said, 'Was it the black dog, father?'

"Gavin, then she knew; and I stood helpless and watched my wife grow old. In that moment she lost the sprightliness I loved the more because I had none of it myself, and the bloom went from her face never to return.

"'He has come back,' she said.

"I told her what I had seen, and while I spoke she put on her bonnet, and I exulted, thinking—and then she took off her bonnet, and I knew she would not go away with me.

"'Margaret,' I cried, 'I am that bairn's father.'

"'Adam's my man,' she said, and at that I gave her a look for which God might have struck me dead. But instead of blaming me she put her arms round my neck.

"After that we said very little. We sat at opposite sides of the fire, waiting for him, and you played on the floor. The harvesters trooped by, and there was a fiddle; and when it stopped, long stillness, and then a step. It was not Adam. You fell asleep, and we could hear nothing but the sea. There was a harvest moon.

"Once a dog ran past the door, and we both rose. Margaret pressed her hands on her breast. Sometimes she looked furtively at me, and I knew her thoughts. To me it was only misery that had come, but to her it was shame, so that when you woke and climbed into her lap she shivered at your touch. I could not look at her after that, for there was a horror of me growing in her face.

"Ten o'clock struck, and then again there was no sound but the sea pouring itself out on the beach. It was long after this, when to me there was still no other sound, that Margaret screamed, and you hid behind her. Then I heard it.

"'Gavin,' Margaret said to me, 'be a good man all your life.'

"It was louder now, and then it stopped. Above the wash of the sea we heard another sound,—a sharp tap, tap. You said, 'I know what sound that is; it's a man knocking the ashes out of his pipe against his boot.'

"Then the dog pushed the door off the latch, and Adam lurched in. He was not drunk, but he brought the smell of drink into the room with him. He was grinning like one bringing rare news, and before she could shrink back or I could strike him he had Margaret in his arms.

"'Lord, lass,' he said, with many jovial oaths, 'to think I'm back again! There, she's swounded. What folks b women, to be sure.'

"'We thought you were dead, Adam,' she said, coming t

"'Bless your blue eyes,' he answered, gleefully; 'often says to myself, "Meggy will be thinking I'm with the fishes, and then I chuckles.'

"'Where have you been all this time?' I demanded, sternly

"'Gavin,' he said, effusively, 'your hand. And don't loo so feared, man; I bear no malice for what you've done. heard all about it at the Cross Anchors.'

"'Where have you been these five years and a half?' repeated.

"'Where have I no been, lad?' he replied.

"'At Harvie,' I said.

"'Right you are,' said he, good-naturedly. 'Meggie, I ha no intention of leaving you that day, though I was yawnin myself to death in Harvie; but I sees a whaler, and I think "That's a tidy boat, and I'm a tidy man, and if they'll tak me and the dog, off we go."'

"'You never wrote to me,' Margaret said.

"'I meant to send you some scrapes,' he answered, 'but wasna till I changed ships that I had the chance, and then minds, "Meggy kens I'm no hand with the pen." But swear I often thought of you, lass; and look you here, that better than letters, and so is that, and every penny of it yours.'

"He flung two bags of gold upon the table, and their chi brought you out from behind your mother.

"'Hallo!' Adam cried.

"'He is mine,' I said. 'Gavin, come here.' But Margar held you back.

"'Here's a go,' Adam muttered, and scratched his hea Then he slapped his thigh. 'Gavin,' he said, in his friendl est way, 'we'll toss for him.'

"He pulled the knife that is now in my desk from h pocket, spat on it, and flung it up. 'Dry, the kid's ou Meggy,' he explained; 'wet, he goes to Gavin.' I clinch my fist to— But what was the use? He caught the kni and showed it to me.

"'Dry,' he said, triumphantly; 'so he is ours, Meg Kiddy, catch the knife. It is yours; and, mind, you ha changed dads. And now that we have settled that, Gavi there's my hand again.'

"I went away and left them, and I never saw Margaret gain until the day you brought her to Thrums. But I saw ou once, a few days after Adam came back. I was in the choolhouse, packing my books, and you were playing on the aste ground. I asked you how your mother was, and you aid, 'She's fleid to come to the door till you gang awa, and y father's buying a boat.'

" 'I'm your father,' I said; but you answered, confidently:

" 'You're no a living man. You're just a man I dreamed bout; and I promised my mother no to dream about you gain.'

" 'I am your father,' I repeated.

" 'My father's awa buying a fishing-boat,' you insisted; nd when I speir at my mother whaur my first father is, she ays I'm havering.'

" 'Gavin Ogilvy is your name,' I said. 'No,' you answered, have a new name. My mother telled me my name is aye be Gavin Dishart now. She telled me, too, to fling awa is knife my father gave me, and I've flung it awa a lot o' mes, but I aye pick it up again.'

" 'Give it to me,' I said, with the wicked thoughts of a fool my head.

"That is how your knife came into my possession. I left arvie that night in the carrier's cart, but I had not the heart return to college. Accident brought me here, and I thought a fitting place in which to bury myself from Margaret."

CHAPTER XXXV.

COND JOURNEY OF THE DOMINIE TO THRUMS DURING THE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

HERE was a nauseous draught for me. Having finished my e, I turned to Gavin for sympathy; and, behold, he had en listening for the cannon, instead of to my final words. , like an old woman at her hearth, we warm our hands at r sorrows and drop in fagots, and each thinks his own fire sun, in presence of which all other fires should go out. was soured to see Gavin prove this, and then I could have ughed without mirth, for had not my bitterness proved too?

"And now," I said, rising, "whether Margaret is to hold

up her head henceforth lies no longer with me, but w
you."

It was not to that he replied.

"You have suffered long, Mr. Ogilvy," he said. "Fathe
he added, wringing my hand. I called him son; but it w
only an exchange of musty words that we had found too la
A father is a poor estate to come into at two and twenty

"I should have been told of this," he said.

"Your mother did right, sir, I answered, slowly, but
shook his head.

"I think you have misjudged her, he said. 'Doubtless wh
my fa—, while Adam Dishart lived, she could only think
you with pain; but after his death—"

"After his death," I said, quietly, "I was still so horri
to her that she left Harvie without letting a soul kn
whither she was bound. She dreaded my following her."

"Stranger to me," he said, after a pause, "than even y
story is her being able to keep it from me. I believed
thought ever crossed her mind that she did not let me shar

"And none, I am sure, ever did," I answered, "save th
and such thoughts as a woman has with God only. It w
my lot to bring disgrace on her. She thought it noth
less, and she has hidden it all these years for your sa
until now it is not burdensome. I suppose she feels t
God has taken the weight off her. Now you are to pu
heavier burden in its place."

He faced me boldly, and I admire him for it now.

"I cannot admit," he said, "that I did wrong in forgett
my mother for that fateful quarter of an hour. Babbie
I loved each other, and I was given the opportunity of mak
her mine or losing her for ever. Have you forgotten that
this tragedy you have told me of only grew out of your c
indecision? I took the chance that you let slip by."

"I had not forgotten," I replied. "What else made
tell you last night that Babbie was in Nanny's house?"

"But now you are afraid,—now when the deed is d
when for me there can be no turning back. Whatever
the issue, I should be a cur to return to Thrums without
wife. Every minute I feel my strength returning, and be
you reach Thrums I will have set out to the Spittal."

There was nothing to say after that. He came with us
the rain as far as the dyke, warning me against telling
people what was not true.

"My first part," I answered, "will be to send word

your mother that you are in safety. After that I must see Whamond. Much depends on him."

"You will not go to my mother?"

"Not so long as she has a roof over her head," I said, "but that may not be for long."

So, I think, we parted,—each soon to forget the other in a woman.

But I had not gone far when I heard something that topped me as sharply as if it had been McKenzie's hand once more on my shoulder. For a second the noise appalled me, and then, before the echo began, I knew it must be the Spittal cannon. My only thought was one of thankfulness. Now Gavin must see the wisdom of my reasoning. I would wait for him until he was able to come with me to Thrums. I turned back, and in my haste I ran through water I had gone round before.

I was too late. He was gone, and into the rain I shouted his name in vain. That he had started for the Spittal there could be no doubt; that he would ever reach it was less certain. The earl's collie was still crouching by the fire, and, thinking it might be a guide to him, I drove the brute to the door, and chased it in the direction he probably had taken. Not until it had run from me did I resume my own journey. I do not need to be told that you who read would follow Gavin now rather than me; but you must bear with me dominie for a little while yet, as I see no other way of making things clear.

In some ways I was not ill equipped for my attempt. I do not know any one of our hillsides as it is known to the shepherd, to whom every rabbit-hole and glimmer of mica is a landmark; but he, like his flock, has only to cross a dyke to find himself in a strange land, while I have been everywhere in the glen.

In the foreground the rain slanted, transparent till it reached the ground, where a mist seemed to blow it along as wind ruffles grass. In the distance all was a driving mist. I have been out for perhaps an hour in rains as fretting, and I have watched floods from my window, but never since have I known the fifth part of a season's rainfall in eighteen hours; and if there should be the like here again, we shall be found better prepared for it. Men have been lost in the glen in mists so thick that they could plunge their fingers out of sight in it as into a meal girnel; but this mist never came within twenty yards of me. I was

surrounded by it, however, as if I was in a round ten and out of this tent I could not walk, for it advanced wi me. On the other side of this screen were horrible noise at whose cause I could only guess, save now and again wh a tongue of water was shot at my feet, or great stones cam crashing through the canvas of mist. Then I ran wherev safety prompted, and thus tangled my bearings until was like that one in the child's game who is blindfold and turned round three times that he may not know ea from west.

Once I stumbled over a dead sheep and a living lam and in a clump of trees which puzzled me—for they we where I thought no trees should be—a wood-pigeon fl to me, but struck my breast with such force that I pick it up dead. I saw no other living thing, though half dozen times I must have passed within cry of farmhous At one time I was in a corn field, where I had to lift m hands to keep them out of water, and a dread filled that I had wandered in a circle, and was still on Was Lunny's land. I plucked some corn and held it to my ey to see if it was green; but it was yellow, and so I kn that at last I was out of the glen.

People up here will complain if I do not tell how I fou the farmer of Green Brae's fifty pounds. It is one the best-remembered incidents of the flood, and happen shortly after I got out of the corn field. A house r suddenly before me, and I was hastening to it when suddenly three of its walls fell. Before my mind co give a meaning to what my eyes told it, the water t had brought down the house had lifted me off my f and flung me among waves. That would have b the last of the dominie had I not struck against a che then half way on its voyage to the sea. I think the gave way under me; but that is surmise, for from the ti the house fell till I was on the river in a kist that w like to be my coffin, is almost a blank. After what m have been but a short journey, though I had time in to say my prayers twice, we stopped, jammed among fal trees; and seeing a bank within reach, I tried to cr up it. In this there would have been little difficulty not the contents of the kist caught in my feet and h on to them, like living things afraid of being left beh I let down my hands to disentangle my feet, but failed: then, grown desperate, I succeeded in reaching firm grou

dragging I knew not what after me. It proved to be a pillow-slip. Green Brae still shudders when I tell him that my first impulse was to leave the pillow-slip unopened. However, I ripped it up, for to undo the wet strings that had ravelled round my feet would have wearied even a man with a needle to pick open the knots; and among broken gimlets, the head of a grape, and other things no beggar would have stolen, I found a tin canister containing fifty pounds. Waster Lunny says that this should have made a religious man of Green Brae, and it did to this extent, that he called the fall of the cotter's house providential. Otherwise, the cotter, at whose expense it may be said the money was found, remains the more religious man of the two.

At last I came to the Kelpie's brig, and I could have wept in joy (and might have been better employed), when, like everything I saw on that journey, it broke suddenly through the mist, and seemed to run at me like a living monster. Next moment I ran back, for as I stepped upon the bridge I saw that I had been about to walk into the air. What was left of the Kelpie's brig ended in midstream. Instead of thanking God for the light without which I should have gone abruptly to my death, I sat down, miserable and hopeless.

Presently I was up and trudging to the Loups of Malcolm. At the Loups the river runs narrow and deep between cliffs, and the spot is so called because one Malcolm jumped across it when pursued by wolves. Next day he returned boastfully to look at his jump, and gazing at it turned dizzy and fell into the river. Since that time chains have been hung across the Loups to reduce the distance between the farms of Carwhimple and Keep-What-You-Can from a mile to a hundred yards. You must cross the chains on your breast. They were suspended there by Rob Angus, who was also the first to breast them.

But I never was a Rob Angus. When my pupils practise what they call the high jump, two small boys hold a string aloft, and the bigger ones run at it gallantly until they reach it, when they stop meekly and creep beneath. They will repeat this twenty times, and yet never, when they start for the string, seem to know where their courage will fail. Nay, they will even order the small boys to hold the string higher. I have smiled at this, but it was the same courage while the difficulty is far off that took me to the Loups At sight of them I turned away.

I prayed to God for a little of the mettle of other men and He heard me, for with my eyes shut I seemed to see Margaret beckoning from across the abyss as if she had need of me. Then I rose calmly and tested the chains, and crossed them on my breast. Many have done it with the same danger, at which they laugh, but without that vision I should have held back.

I was now across the river, and so had left the chance of drowning behind, but I was farther from Thrums than when I left the schoolhouse, and this country-side was almost unknown to me. The mist had begun to clear, so that I no longer wandered into fields; but though I kept to the roads, I could not tell that they led towards Thrums, and in my exhaustion I had often to stand still. Then to make a new start in the mud was like pulling stakes out of the ground. So long as the rain faced me I thought I could not be straying far; but after an hour I lost this guide, for a wind rose that blew it in all directions.

In another hour, when I should have been drawing near Thrums, I found myself in a wood, and here I think my distress was greatest; nor is this to be marvelled at, for instead of being near Thrums, I was listening to the monotonous roar of the sea. I was too spent to reason, but I knew that I must have travelled direct east, and must be close to the German Ocean. I remember putting my back against a tree and shutting my eyes, and listening to the lash of the waves against the beach, and hearing the faint toll of a bell, and wondering listlessly on what lighthouse it was ringing. Doubtless I would have lain down to sleep for ever had I not heard another sound near at hand. It was the knock of a hammer on wood, and might have been a fisherman mending his boat. The instinct of self-preservation carried me to it, and presently I was at a little house. A man was standing in the rain hammering new hinges to the door; and though I did not recognise him, I saw with bewilderment that the woman at his side was Nanny.

"It's the dominie," she cried, and her brother added: "Losh, sir, you hinna the look o' a living man."

"Nanny," I said, in perplexity, "what are you doing here?"

"Whaur else should I be?" she asked.

I pressed my hands over my eyes, crying, "Where am I?"

Nanny shrank from me, but Sanders said, "Has the rain driven you gyte, man? You're in Thrums."

"But the sea," I said, distrusting him. "I hear it. Listen!"
"That's the wind in Windyghoul," Sanders answered, looking at me queerly. "Come awa into the house."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THRUMS DURING THE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS—DEFENCE OF THE MANSE.

HARDLY had I crossed the threshold of the mud house when such a sickness came over me that I could not have looked up, though Nanny's voice had suddenly changed to Margaret's. Vaguely I knew that Nanny had put the kettle on the fire,—a woman's first thought when there is illness in the house,—and as I sat with my hands over my face I heard the water dripping from my clothes to the floor.

"Why is that bell ringing?" I asked, at last, ignoring all questions and speaking through my fingers. An artist, I suppose, could paint all expression out of a human face. The sickness was having that effect on my voice.

"It's the Auld Licht bell," Sanders said; "and it's almost as fearsome to listen to as last nicht's rain. I wish I kent what they're ringing it for."

"Wish no sic things," said Nancy, nervously. "There's things it's best to put off kenning as lang as we can."

"It's that ill-cleakit witch, Effie McBean, that makes Nanny speak so doleful," Sanders told me. "There was to be a prayer-meeting last nicht, but Mr. Dishart never came to't, though they rang till they wraxed their arms; and now Effie says it'll ring on by itsel' till he's brocht hame a corp. The hellicat says the rain's a dispensation to drown him in for neglect o' duty. Sal, I would think little o' the Lord if He needed to create a new sea to drown one man in. Nanny, you cuttie, that's no swearing; I defy you to find a single lonely oath in what I've said."

"Never mind Effie McBean," I interposed. "What are the congregation saying about the minister's absence?"

"We ken little except what Effie telled us," Nanny answered. "I was at Tilliedrum yestreen, meeting Sanders as he got out o' the gaol, and that awfu' onding began when we was on the Bellies Braes. We fecht our way through it, but not a soul did we meet; and wha would gang out the

day that can bide at hame? Ay, but Effie says it's ke in Thrums that Mr. Dishart has run off wi'—wi' an Egy tian."

"You're waur than her, Nanny," Sanders said, rough "for you hae twa reasons for kenning better. In the fi place, has Mr. Dishart no keped you in siller a' the ti I was awa? and for another, have I no been at the manse

My head rose now.

"He gaed to the manse," Nanny explained, "to thank M Dishart for being so good to me. Ay, but Jean would let him in. I'm thinking that looks gey gray."

"Whatever was her reason," Sanders admitted, "Je wouldna open the door; but I keeked in at the parlour wi dow, and saw Mrs. Dishart in't, looking very cosylike a lauching; and do you think I would hae seen that if ill h come ower the minister?"

"Not if Margaret knew of it." I said to myself, and wo dered at Whamond's forbearance.

"She had a skein o' worsted stretched out on her hand Sanders continued, "and a young leddy was winding it. didna see her richt, but she wasna a Thrums leddy."

"Effie McBean says she's his intended, come to call h to account," Nanny said; but I hardly listened, for I sa that I must hurry to Tammas Whamond's. Nanny follow me to the gate with her gown pulled over her head, a said, excitedly:

"Oh, dominie, I warrant it's true. It'll be Babbie. Sand doesna suspect, because I've telled him nothing about h Oh, what's to be done? They were baith so good to m

I could only tell her to keep what she knew to herself.

"Has Rob Dow come back?" I called out after I had start

"Whaur frae?" she replied; and then I remembered t all these things had happened while Nanny was at Tilliedru In this life some of the seven ages are spread over t decades, and others pass as quickly as a stage play. Thou a fifth of a season's rain had fallen in a night and a d it had scarcely kept pace with Gavin.

I hurried to the town by the Roods. That brae was deserted as the country roads, except where children h escaped from their mothers to wade in it. Here and th dams were keeping the water away from one door to s it with greater volume to another, and at points the gre had fallen in. But this I noticed without interest. I not even realise that I was holding my head painfully

the side where it had been blown by the wind and glued by the rain. I have never held my head straight since that journey.

Only a few looms were going, their pedals in water. I was addressed from several doors and windows, once by Charles Yuill.

"Dinna pretend," he said, "that you've walked in frae the schoolhouse alane. The rain chased me into this house yestreen, and here it has keeped me, though I bide no further awa than Tillyloss."

"Charles," I said, in a low voice, "why is the Auld Licht bell ringing?"

"Hae you no heard about Mr. Dishart?" he asked. "Oh, man! that's Lang Tammas in the kirk by himsel', tearing at the bell to bring the folk thegither to depose the minister."

Instead of going to Whamond's house in the school wynd I hastened down the Banker's close to the kirk, and had almost to turn back, so choked was the close with the floating refuse. I could see the bell swaying, but the kirk was locked, and I battered on the door to no purpose. Then, remembering that Hendry Munn lived in Coutt's trance, I set off for his house. He saw me crossing the square, but would not open his door until I was close to it.

"When I open," he cried, "squeeze through quick;" but though I did his bidding a rush of water darted in before me. Hendry reclosed the door by flinging himself against it.

"When I saw you crossing the square," he said, "it was surprise enough to cure the hiccup."

"Hendry," I replied, instantly, "why is the Auld Licht bell ringing?"

He put his finger to his lip. "I see," he said, imperturbably. "you've met our folk in the glen and heard frae them about the minister."

"What folk?"

"Mair than half the congregation," he replied. "I started for Glen Quharity twa hours syne to help the farmers. You didna see them?"

"No; they must have been on the other side of the river." Again that question forced my lips, "Why is the bell ringing?"

"Canny, dominie," he said, "till we're up the stair. Mysy Moncur's lug's at her keyhole listening to you."

"You lie, Hendry Munn," cried an invisible woman. The voice became more plaintive: "I ken a heap, Hendry, so you may as well tell me a'."

"Lick away at the bone you hae," the shoemaker replied, heartlessly, and conducted me to his room up one of the few inside stairs then in Thrums. Hendry's oddest furniture was five boxes, fixed to the wall at such a height that children could climb into them from a high stool. In these his bairns slept, and so space was economised. I could never laugh at the arrangement, as I knew that Betty had planned it on her death-bed for her man's sake. Five little heads bobbed up in their beds as I entered, but more vexing to me was Wearyworld on a stool.

"In by, dominie," he said, sociably. "Sal, you needna fear burning wi' a' that water on you. You're in mair danger o' coming a-boil."

"I want to speak to you alone, Hendry," I said, bluntly.

"You winna put me out, Hendry?" the alarmed policeman entreated. "Mind, you said in sic weather you would be friendly to a brute beast. Ay, ay, dominie, what's your news? It's welcome, be it good or bad. You would meet the townsfolk in the glen, and they would tell you about Mr. Dishart. What, you hinna heard? Oh, sirs, he's a lost man. There would hae been a meeting the day to depose him if so many hadna gaen to the glen. But the morn'll do as weel. The very women is cursing him, and the laddies has begun to gather stanes. He's married on an Egyp—"

"Hendry!" I cried, like one giving an order.

"Wearyworld, step!" said Hendry, sternly, and then added, soft-heartedly: "Here's a bit news that'll open Mysy Moncur's door to you. You can tell her frae me that the bell's ringing just because I forgot to tie it up last nicht, and the wind's shaking it, and I winna gang out in the rain to stop it."

"Ay," the policeman said, looking at me sulkily, "she may open her door for that, but it'll no let me in. Tell me mair. Tell me wha the leddy at the manse is."

"Out you go," answered Hendry. "Once she opens the door, you can shove your foot in, and syne she's in your power." He pushed Wearyworld out, and came back to me saying, "It was best to tell him the truth, to keep him frae making up lies."

"But is it the truth? I was told Lang Tammas—"

"Ay, I ken that story; but Tammas has other work on hand."

"Then tie up the bell at once, Hendry," I urged.

"I canna," he answered, gravely. "Tammas took the key

o' the kirk fram me yestreen, and winna gie them up. He says the bell's being rung by the hand o' God."

"Has he been at the manse? Does Mrs. Dishart know—?"

"He's been at the manse twa or three times, but Jean barred him out. She'll let nobody in till the minister comes back, and so the mistress kens nothing. But what's the use o' keeping it frae her ony langer?"

"Every use," I said.

"None," answered Hendry, sadly. "Dominie, the minister was married to the Egyptian on the hill last nicht, and Tammas was witness. Not only were they married, but they've run aff thegither."

"You are wrong, Hendry," I assured him, telling as much as I dared. "I left Mr. Dishart in my house."

"What! But if that is so, how did he no come back wi' you?"

"Because he was nearly drowned in the flood."

"She'll be wi' him?"

"He was alone."

Hendry's face lit up dimly with joy, and then he shook his head. "Tammas was witness," he said. "Can you deny the marriage?"

"All I ask of you," I answered, guardedly, "is to suspend judgment until the minister returns."

"There can be nothing done, at ony rate," he said, "till the folk themsel's come back frae the glen; and I needna tell you how glad we would a' be to be as fond o' him as ever. But Tammas was witness."

"Have pity on his mother, man."

"We've done the best for her we could," he replied. "We prigged wi' Tammas no to gang to the manse till we was sure the minister was living. 'For if he has been drowned,' we said, 'his mother need never ken what we were thinking o' doing.' Ay, and we're sorry for the young leddy, too."

"What young lady is this you all talk of?" I asked.

"She's his intended. Ay, you needna start. She has come a' the road frae Glasgow to challenge him about the gypsy. The pitiful thing is that Mrs. Dishart lauched awa her fears, and now they're baith waiting for his return, as happy as ignorance can make them."

"There is no such lady," I said.

"But there is," he answered, doggedly, "for she came in a machine late last nicht, and I was ane o' a dozen that baith heard and saw it through my window. It stopped at the

manse near half an hour. What's mair, the lady hersel' was at Sam'l Farquharson's in the Tenements the day for twa hours."

I listened in bewilderment and fear.

"Sam'l's bairn's down wi' scarlet fever and like to die, and him being a widow-man he has gone useless. You mauna blame the wives in the Tenements for hauding back. They're fleid to smit their ain litlins; and as it happens, Sam'l's friends is a' aff to the glen. Weel, he ran greeting to the manse for Mr. Dishart, and the lady heard him crying to Jean through the door, and what does she do but gang straucht to the Tenements wi' Sam'l. Her goodness has naturally put the folk on her side against the minister."

"This does not prove her his intended," I broke in.

"She was heard saying to Sam'l," answered the kirk officer, "that the minister being awa, it was her duty to take his place. Yes, and though she little kent it, he was already married."

"Hendry," I said, rising, "I must see this lady at once. Is she still at Farquharson's house?"

"She may be back again by this time. Tammas set off for Sam'l's as soon as he heard she was there, but he just missed her. I left him there an hour syne. He was waiting for her, determined to tell her all."

I set off for the Tenements at once, declining Hendry's company. The wind had fallen, so that the bell no longer rang, but the rain was falling doggedly. The streets were still deserted. I pushed open the precentor's door in the school wynd, but there was no one in the house. Tibbie Birse saw me, and shouted from her door:

"Hae you heard o' Mr. Dishart? He'll never daur show face in Thrums again."

Without giving her a word I hastened to the Tenements.

"The leddy's no here," Sam'l Farquharson told me, "and Tammas is back at the manse again, trying to force his way in."

From Sam'l, too, I turned, with no more than a groan; but he cried after me, "Perdition on the man that has played that leddy false."

Had Margaret been at her window she must have seen me, so recklessly did I hurry up the minister's road, with nothing in me but a passion to take Whamond by the throat. He was not in the garden. The kitchen door was open. Jean was standing at it with her apron to her eyes.

"Tammas Whamond?" I demanded, and my face completed e question.

"You're ower late," she wailed. "He's wi' her. Oh, minie, whaur's the minister?"

"You base woman!" I cried, "why did you unbar the oor?"

"It was the mistress," she answered. "She heard him aking it, and I had to tell her wha it was. Dominie, it's a' y wite! He tried to get in last nicht, and roared threats rough the door, and after he had gone awa she speired ha I had been speaking to. I had to tell her, but I said e had come to let her ken that the minister was taking helter frae the rain in a farmhouse. Ay, I said he was bide there till the flood gaed down, and that's how she as been easy a' day. I acted for the best, but I'm sair unished now; for when she heard Tammas at the door twa r three minutes syne, she ordered me to let him in, so hat she could thank him for bringing the news last nicht, espite the rain. They're in the parlour. Oh, dominie, ang in and stop his mouth."

This was hard. I dared not go to the parlour. Margaret night have died at sight of me. I turned my face from ean.

"Jean," said some one, opening the inner kitchen door, why did you—?"

She stopped, and that was what turned me round. As he spoke, I thought it was the young lady; when I looked saw it was Babbie, though no longer in a gypsy's dress. Then I knew that the young lady and Babbie were one.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HOW BABBIE SPENT THE NIGHT OF AUGUST FOURTH.

How had the Egyptian been spirited here from the Spittal? did not ask the question. To interest myself in Babbie t that dire hour of Margaret's life would have been as mpossible to me as to sit down to a book. To others, owever, it is only an old woman on whom the parlour door f the manse has closed, only a garrulous dominie that is n pain outside it. Your eyes are on the young wife.

When Babbie was plucked off the hill, she thought as

little as Gavin that her captor was Rob Dow. Close as was to her, he was but a shadow until she screamed the se ond time, when he pressed her to the ground, and tied l neckerchief over her mouth. Then, in the moment th power of utterance was taken from her, she saw the fa that had startled her at Nanny's window. Half carried, s was borne forward rapidly, until some one seemed to rise o of the broom, and strike them both. They had only r against the doctor's trap; and, huddling her into it, Do jumped up beside her. He tied her hands together with cord. For a time the horse feared the darkness in fro more than the lash behind; but when the rains became te rific, it rushed ahead wildly,—probably with its eyes shu

In three minutes Babbie went through all the degrees fear. In the first she thought Lord Rintoul had kidnapp her; but no sooner had her captor resolved himself into Do drunk with the events of the day and night, than in th earl's hands would have lain safety. Next, Dow was fo gotten in the dread of a sudden death which he must shar And lastly, the rain seemed to be driving all other horro back, that it might have her for its own. Her perils i creased to the unbearable as quickly as an iron in the f passes through the various stages between warmth and whi heat. Then she had to do something; and as she could n cry out, she flung herself from the dog-cart. She fe heavily in Caddam Wood, but the rain would not let h lie there stunned. It beat her back to consciousness, ar she sat up on her knees, and listened breathlessly, starir in the direction the trap had taken, as if her eyes could he her ears.

All night, I have said, the rain poured, but those charg only rode down the deluge at intervals, as now and agai one wave greater than the others stalks over the sea. I the first lull it appeared to Babbie that the storm had swe by, leaving her to Dow. Now she heard the rubbing of th branches, and felt the torn leaves falling on her gown. Sh rose to feel her way out of the wood with her bound hand then sank in terror, for some one had called her name. Nex moment she was up again, for the voice was Gavin's, wh was hurrying after her, as he thought, down Windyghou He was no farther away than a whisper might have carrie on a still night, but she dared not pursue him, for alread Dow was coming back. She could not see him, but sh heard the horse whinny and the rocking of the dog-car

Dow was now at the brute's head, and probably it tried to bite him, for he struck it, crying:

"Would you? Stand still till I find her. I heard her move this minute."

Babbie crouched upon a big stone and sat motionless while he groped for her. Her breathing might have been tied now, as well as her mouth. She heard him feeling for her, first with his feet and then with his hands, and swearing when his head struck against a tree.

"I ken you're within hearing," he muttered, "and I'll hae you yet. I have a gully-knife in my hand. Listen!"

He severed a whin-stalk with the knife, and Babbie seemed to see the gleam of the blade.

"What do I mean by wanting to kill you?" he said, as if she had asked the question. "Do you no ken wha said to me, 'Kill this woman?' It was the Lord. 'I winna kill her,' I said, 'but I'll cart her out o' the country.' 'Kill her,' says He; 'why encumbereth she the ground?'"

He resumed his search, but with new tactics. "I see you now," he would cry, and rush forward perhaps within a yard of her. Then she must have screamed had she had the power. When he tied that neckerchief round her mouth he prolonged her life.

Then came the second hurricane of rain, so appalling that had Babbie's hands been free she would have pressed them to her ears. For a full minute she forgot Dow's presence. A living thing touched her face. The horse had found her. She recoiled from it, but its frightened head pressed heavily on her shoulder. She rose and tried to steal away, but the brute followed, and as the rain suddenly exhausted itself she heard the dragging of the dog-cart. She had to halt.

Again she heard Dow's voice. Perhaps he had been speaking throughout the roar of the rain. If so, it must have made him deaf to his own words. He groped for the horse's head, and presently his hand touched Babbie's dress, then jumped from it, so suddenly had he found her. No sound escaped him, and she was beginning to think it possible that he had mistaken her for a bush when his hand went over her face. He was making sure of his discovery.

"The Lord has delivered you into my hands," he said, in a low voice, with some awe in it. Then he pulled her to the ground, and, sitting down beside her, rocked himself backward and forward, his hands round his knees. She

would have bartered the world for power to speak to him.

"He wouldna hear o' my just carting you to some other country-side," he said, confidentially. "'The devil would just blaw her back again,' says He, 'therefore kill her.' 'And if I kill her,' I says, 'they'll hang me.' 'You can hang yoursel',' says he. 'What wi'?' I speired. 'Wi' the reins o' the dog-cart,' says He. 'They would break,' says I. 'Weel, weel,' says He, 'though they do hang you, nobody'll miss you.' 'That's true,' says I, 'and You are a just God.'"

He stood up and confronted her.

"Prisoner at the bar," he said, "hae ye onything to say why sentence of death shouldna be pronounced against you? She doesna answer. She kens death is her deserts."

By this time he had forgotten probably why his victim was dumb.

"Prisoner at the bar, hand back to me the soul o' Gavin Dishart. You winna? Did the devil, your master, summon you to him and say, 'Either that noble man or me maun leave Thrums?' He did. And did you, or did you no, drag that minister, when under your spell, to the hill, and there marry him ower the tongs? You did. Witnesses, Rob Dow and Tammas Whamond."

She was moving from him on her knees, meaning when out of arm's reach to make a dash for life.

"Sit down," he grumbled, "or how can you expect a fair trial? Prisoner at the bar, you have been found guilty of witchcraft."

For the first time his voice faltered.

"That's the difficulty, for witches canna die, except by burning or drowning. There's no blood in you for my knife, and your neck wouldna twist. Your master has brocht the rain to put out a' the fires, and we'll hae to wait till it runs into a pool deep enough to drown you.

"I wonder at You, God. Do You believe her master'll mak' the pool for her? He'll rather stop his rain. Mr. Dishart said You was mair powerful than the devil, but it doesna look like it. If You had the power, how did You no stop this woman working her will on the minister? You kent what she was doing, for You ken a' things. Mr Dishart says You ken a' things. If You do, the mair shame to You. Would a shepherd, that could help it, let dogs worry his sheep? Kill her! It's fine to cry 'Kill her,' but whaur's the bonfire, whaur's the pool? You that made the

heaven and the earth, and all that in them is, can You so set fire to some wet whins, or change this stane into a mill-dam?"

He struck the stone with his fist, and then gave a cry of exultation. He raised the great slab in his arms and flung it from him. In that moment Babbie might have run away, but she fainted. Almost simultaneously with Dow she knew this was the stone which covered the Caddam well. When she came to, Dow was speaking, and his voice had become solemn.

"You said your master was mair powerful than mine, and I said it, too, and all the time you was sitting here wi' the very pool aneath you that I have been praying for. Listen!"

He dropped a stone into the well, and she heard it strike the water.

"What are you shaking at?" he said, in reproof. "Was it no yoursel' that chose the spot? Lassie, say your prayers. Are you saying them?"

He put his hand over her face, to feel if her lips were moving, and tore off the neckerchief.

And then again the rain came between them. In that rain one could not think. Babbie did not know that she had bitten through the string that tied her hands. She planned no escape. But she flung herself at the place where Dow had been standing. He was no longer there, and she fell heavily, and was on her feet again in an instant, and running recklessly. Trees intercepted her, and she thought they were Dow, and wrestled with them. By and by she fell into Windyghoul, and there she crouched until all her senses were restored to her, when she remembered that she had been married lately.

How long Dow was in discovering that she had escaped, and whether he searched for her, no one knows. After a time he jumped into the dog-cart again, and drove aimlessly through the rain. That wild journey probably lasted two hours, and came to an abrupt end only when a tree fell upon the trap. The horse galloped off, but one of Dow's legs was beneath the tree, and there he had to lie helpless, for though the leg was little injured, he could not extricate himself. A night and day passed, and he believed that he must die; but even in this plight he did not forget the man he loved. He found a piece of slate, and in the darkness cut these words on it with his knife:

"Me being about to die, I solemnly swear I didna see th minister marrying an Egyptian on the hill this nicht. May burn in Hell if this is no true.

(Signed) "Rob Dow."

This document he put in his pocket, and so preserve proof of what he was perjuring himself to deny.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BABBIE AND MARGARET—DEFENCE OF THE MANSE CONTINUED

The Egyptian was mournful in Windyghoul, up which she had once danced and sung; but you must not think that she still feared Dow. I felt McKenzie's clutch on my arm for hours after he left me, but she was far braver than I: indeed, dangers at which I should have shut my eyes only made hers gleam, and I suppose it was sheer love of them that first made her play the coquette with Gavin. If she cried now, it was not for herself; it was because she thought she had destroyed him. Could I have gone to her then and said that Gavin wanted to blot out the gypsy wedding, that throbbing little breast would have frozen at once, and the drooping head would have been proud again, and she would have gone away for ever without another tear.

What do I say? I am doing a wrong to the love these two bore each other. Babbie would not have taken so base a message from my lips. He would have had to say the words to her himself before she believed them his. What would he want her to do now? was the only question she asked herself. To follow him was useless, for in that rain and darkness two people might have searched for each other all night in a single field. That he would go to the Spittal, thinking her in Rintoul's dog-cart, she did not doubt; and his distress was painful to her to think of. But not knowing that the burns were in flood, she underestimated his danger.

Remembering that the mud house was near, she groped her way to it, meaning to pass the night there; but at the gate she turned away hastily, hearing from the door the voice of a man she did not know to be Nanny's brother. She wandered recklessly a short distance, until the rain began

to threaten again, and then, falling on her knees in the broom, she prayed to God for guidance. When she rose she set off for the manse.

The rain that followed the flash of lightning had brought Margaret to the kitchen.

"Jean, did you ever hear such a rain? It is trying to break into the manse."

"I canna hear you, ma'am; is it the rain you're feared at?"

"What else could it be?"

Jean did not answer.

"I hope the minister won't leave the church, Jean, till this is over?"

"Nobody would daur, ma'am. The rain'll turn the key on them all."

Jean forced out these words with difficulty, for she knew that the church had been empty and the door locked for over an hour.

"This rain has come as if in answer to the minister's prayer, Jean."

"It wasna rain like this they wanted."

"Jean, you would not attempt to guide the Lord's hand. The minister will have to reprove the people for thinking too much of him again, for they will say that he induced God to send the rain. To-night's meeting will be remembered long in Thrums."

Jean shuddered, and said, "It's mair like an ordinary rain now, ma'am."

"But it has put out your fire, and I wanted another heater. Perhaps the one I have is hot enough, though."

Margaret returned to the parlour, and from the kitchen Jean could hear the heater tilted backward and forward in the box-iron,—a pleasant, homely sound when there is happiness in the house. Soon she heard a step outside, however, and it was followed by a rough shaking of the barred door.

"Is it you, Mr. Dishart?" Jean asked, nervously.

"It's me, Tammas Whamond," the precentor answered. "Unbar the door."

"What do you want? Speak low."

"I winna speak low. Let me in. I hae news for the minister's mother."

"What news?" demanded Jean.

"Jean Proctor, as chief elder of the kirk I order you to let me do my duty."

"Whaur's the minister?"

"He's a minister no longer. He's married a gypsy woman and run awa wi' her."

"You lie, Tammas Whamond. I believe—"

"Your belief's of no consequence. Open the door, and let me in to tell your mistress what I hae seen."

"She'll hear it first frae his ain lips if she hears it ava. I winna open the door."

"Then I'll burst it open."

Whamond flung himself at the door, and Jean, her fingers rigid with fear, stood waiting for its fall. But the rain came to her rescue by lashing the precentor until even he was forced to run from it.

"I'll be back again," he cried. "Woe to you, Jean Proctor that hae denied your God this nicht."

"Who was that speaking to you, Jean?" asked Margaret reëntering the kitchen. Until the rain abated Jean did not attempt to answer.

"I thought it was the precentor's voice," Margaret said.

Jean was a poor hand at lying, and she stuttered in her answer.

"There is nothing wrong, is there?" cried Margaret, in sudden fright. "My son—"

"Nothing, nothing."

The words jumped from Jean to save Margaret from falling. Now she could not take them back. "I winna believe it o' him," said Jean to herself. "Let them say what they will, I'll be true to him; and when he comes back he'll find her as he left her."

"It was Lang Tammas," she answered her mistress; "but he just came to say that—"

"Quick, Jean, what?"

"Mr. Dishart has been called to a sick bed in the country, ma'am,—to the farm o' Look-About-You; and as it's sic a rain, he's to bide there a' nicht."

"And Whamond came through that rain to tell me this? How good of him. Was there any other message?"

"Just that the minister hoped you would go straight to your bed, ma'am," said Jean, thinking to herself, "There can be no great sin in giving her one mair happy nicht; it may be her last."

The two women talked for a short time, and then read verse about in the parlour from the third chapter of Mark.

"This is the first night we have been left alone in the

manse," Margaret said, as she was retiring to her bedroom, "and we must not grudge the minister to those who have sore need of him. I notice that you have barred the doors."

"Ay, they're barred. Nobody can win in the nicht."

"Nobody will want in, Jean," Margaret said, smiling.

"I dinna ken about that," answered Jean, below her breath. "Ay, ma'am, may you sleep for baith o' us this nicht, for I daurna gang to my bed."

Jean was both right and wrong, for two persons wanted in within the next half hour, and she opened the door to both of them. The first to come was Babbie.

So long as women sit up of nights listening for a footstep, will they flatten their faces at the window, though all without be black. Jean had not been back in the kitchen for two minutes before she raised the blind. Her eyes were close to the glass, when she saw another face almost meet hers, as you may touch your reflection in a mirror. But this face was not her own. It was white and sad. Jean suppressed a cry, and let the blind fall, as if shutting the lid on some uncanny thing.

"Won't you let me in?" said a voice that might have been only the sob of a rain-beaten wind; "I am nearly drowned."

Jean stood like death; but her suppliant would not pass on.

"You are not afraid?" the voice continued. "Raise the blind again, and you will see that no one need fear me."

At this request Jean's hands sought each other's company behind her back.

"Wha are you?" she asked, without stirring. "Are you—the woman?"

"Yes."

"Whaur's the minister?"

The rain again became wild, but this time it only tore by the manse as if to a conflict beyond.

"Are you aye there? I daurna let you in till I'm sure the mistress is bedded. Gang round to the front, and see if there's ony licht burning in the high west window."

"There was a light," the voice said, presently, "but it was turned out as I looked."

"Then I'll let you in, and God kens I mean no wrang by it."

Babbie entered shivering, and Jean rebarred the door. Then she looked long at the woman whom her master loved.

Babbie was on her knees at the hearth, holding out her hands to the dead fire.

"What a pity it's a fause face."

"Do I look so false?"

"Is it true? You're no married to him?"

"Yes, it is true."

"And yet you look as if you was fond o' him. If you cared for him, how could you do it?"

"That was why I did it."

"And him could hae had wha he liked."

"I gave up Lord Rintoul for him."

"What? Na, na; you're the Egyptian."

"You judge me by my dress."

"And soaking it is. How you're shivering,—what neat fingers.—what bonny little feet. I could near believe what you tell me. Aff wi' these rags, an' I'll gie you on my black frock, if—if you promise me no to gang awa wi't."

So Babbie put on some clothes of Jean's, including the black frock, and stockings and shoes.

"Mr. Dishart cannot be back, Jean," she said, "before morning, and I don't want his mother to see me till he comes."

"I wouldna let you near her the nicht though you gaed on your knees to me. But whaur is he?"

Babbie explained why Gavin had set off for the Spittal; but Jean shook her head incredulously, saying, "I canna believe you're that grand leddy, and yet ilka time I look at you I could near believe it."

In another minute Jean had something else to think of, for there came a loud rap upon the front door.

"It's Tammas Whamond back again," she moaned; "and if the mistress hears, she'll tell me to let him in."

"You shall open to me," cried a hoarse voice.

"That's no Tammas's word," Jean said, in bewilderment.

"It is Lord Rintoul," Babbie whispered.

"What? Then it's truth you telled me."

The knocking continued; a door up-stairs opened, and Margaret spoke over the banisters.

"Have you gone to bed, Jean? Some one is knocking at the door, and a minute ago I thought I heard a carriage stop close by. Perhaps the farmer has driven Mr. Dishart home."

"I'm putting on my things, ma'am," Jean answered; then whispered to Babbie, "What's to be done?"

"He won't go away," Babbie answered. "You will have o let him into the parlour, Jean. Can she see the door rom up there?"

"No; but though he was in the parlour?"

"I shall go to him there."

"Make haste, Jean," Margaret called. "If it is any ersons wanting shelter, we must give it them on such a ight."

"A minute, ma'am," Jean answered. To Babbie, she whis- ered, "What shall I say to her?"

"I—I don't know," answered Babbie, ruefully. "Think of omething, Jean. But open the door now. Stop, let me into he parlour first."

The two women stole into the parlour.

"Tell me what will be the result o' his coming here," ntreated Jean.

"The result," Babbie said, firmly, "will be that he shall o away and leave me here."

Margaret heard Jean open the front door and speak to ome person or persons whom she showed into the parlour.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

RINTOUL AND BABBIE—BREAKDOWN OF THE DEFENCE OF THE MANSE.

"You dare to look me in the face!"

They were Rintoul's words. Yet Babbie had only ven- ured to look up because he was so long in speaking. His oice was low, but harsh, like a wheel on which the brake s pressed sharply.

"It seems to be more than the man is capable of," he dded, sourly.

"Do you think," Babbie exclaimed, taking fire, "that he s afraid of you?"

"So it seems; but I will drag him into the light, wherever e is skulking."

Lord Rintoul strode to the door, and the brake was off is tongue already.

"Go," said Babbie, coldly, "and shout and stamp through ne house; you may succeed in frightening the women, who re the only persons in it."

"Where is he?"

"He has gone to the Spittal to see you."

"He knew I was on the hill."

"He lost me in the darkness, and thought you had ru away with me in your trap."

"Ha! So he is off to the Spittal to ask me to give yo back to him."

"To compel you," corrected Babbie.

"Pooh!" said the earl, nervously, "that was but mummer on the hill."

"It was a marriage."

"With gypsies for witnesses. Their word would cou for less than nothing. Babbie, I am still in time to sa you."

"I don't want to be saved. The marriage had witness no court could discredit."

"What witnesses?"

"Mr. McKenzie and yourself."

She heard his teeth meet. When next she looked at hir there were tears in his eyes as well as in her own. It w perhaps the first time these two had ever been in clo sympathy. Both were grieving for Rintoul.

"I am so sorry," Babbie began in a broken voice; the stopped, because they seemed such feeble words.

"If you are sorry," the earl answered, eagerly, "it not yet too late. McKenzie and I saw nothing. Come aw with me, Babbie, if only in pity for yourself."

"Ah, but I don't pity myself."

"Because this man has blinded you."

"No, he has made me see."

"This mummery on the hill—"

"Why do you call it so? I believe God approved of th marriage, as he could never have countenanced yours a mine."

"God! I never heard the word on your lips before."

"I know that."

"It is his teaching, doubtless?"

"Yes."

"And he told you that to do to me as you have done w to be pleasing in God's sight?"

"No; he knows that it was so evil in God's sight th I shall suffer for it always."

"But he has done no wrong, so there is no punishme for him?"

"It is true that he has done no wrong, but his punishment ill be worse, probably, than mine."

"That," said the earl, scoffing, "is not just."

"It is just. He has accepted responsibility for my sins marrying me."

"And what form is his punishment to take?"

"For marrying me he will be driven from his church and shonoured in all men's eyes, unless—unless God is more erciful to us than we can expect."

Her sincerity was so obvious that the earl could no longer eet it with sarcasm.

"It is you I pity now," he said, looking wonderingly at r. "Do you not see that this man has deceived you? here was his boasted purity in meeting you by stealth, as must have been doing, and plotting to take you from me?"

"If you knew him," Babbie answered, "you would not ed to be told that he is incapable of that. He thought e an ordinary gypsy until an hour ago."

"And you had so little regard for me that you waited until e eve of what was to be our marriage, and then, laughg at my shame, ran off to marry him."

"I am not so bad as that," Babbie answered, and told him nat had brought her to Thrums. "I had no thought but returning to you, nor he of keeping me from you. We d said good-bye at the mud house door,—and then we ard your voice."

"And my voice was so horrible to you that it drove you this?"

"I—I love him so much."

What more could Babbie answer? These words told him at, if love commands, home, the friendships of a lifetime, ndnesses incalculable, are at once as naught. Nothing is cruel as love if a rival challenges it to combat.

"Why could you not love me, Babbie?" said the earl, dly. "I have done so much for you."

It was little he had done for her that was not selfish. en are deceived curiously in such matters. When they d a new wing to their house, they do not call the action rtue; but if they give to a fellow creature for their own atification, they demand of God a good mark for it. bbie, however, was in no mood to make light of the earl's fts, and at his question she shook her head sorrowfully.

"Is it because I am too—old?"

This was the only time he ever spoke of his age to her.

"Oh, no, it is not that," she replied, hastily, "I love M Dishart,—because he loves me, I think."

"Have I not loved you always?"

"Never," Babbie answered, simply. "If you had, perha then I should have loved you."

"Babbie," he exclaimed, "if ever man loved woman, a showed it by the sacrifices he made for her, I—"

"No," Babbie said, "you don't understand what it is. Al I did not mean to hurt you."

"If I don't know what it is, what is it?" he asked, almo humbly. "I scarcely know you now."

"That is it," said Babbie.

She gave him back his ring and then he broke dow pitifully. Doubtless there was good in him. But I sa him only once; and with nothing to contrast against it, may not now attempt to breathe life into the dust of senile passion. These were the last words that pass between him and Babbie:

"There was nothing," he said, wistfully, "in this wi world that you could not have had by asking me for it. W not that love?"

"No," she answered. "What right have I to everythi I cry for?"

"You should never have had a care had you married m That is love."

"It is not. I want to share my husband's cares, as expect him to share mine."

"I would have humoured you in everything."

"You always did: as if a woman's mind were for laug ing at, like a baby's passions."

"You had your passions, too, Babbie. Yet did I ev chide you for them? That was love."

"No, it was contempt. Oh," she cried, passionately, "w have not you men to answer for who talk of love to women when her face is all you know of her; and her p sions, her aspirations, are for kissing to sleep, her v soul a plaything? I tell you, Lord Rintoul, and it is the message I send back to the gentlemen at the Spit who made love to me behind your back, that this is a p folly, and well calculated to rouse the wrath of God."

Now, Jean's ear had been to the parlour keyhole for time, but some message she had to take to Margaret, a what she risked saying was this:

"It's Lord Rintoul and a party that has been catched

ne rain, and he would be obliged to you if you could gie is bride shelter for the nicht."

Thus the distracted servant thought to keep Margaret's nind at rest until Gavin came back.

"Lord Rintoul!" exclaimed Margaret. "What a pity Gavin as missed him. Of course she can stay here. Did you say had gone to bed? I should not know what to say to a ord. But ask her to come up to me after he has gone,— nd, Jean, is the parlour looking tidy?"

Lord Rintoul having departed, Jean told Babbie how she ad accounted to Margaret for his visit. "And she telled ne to gie you dry claethes and her compliments, and would ou gang up to the bedroom and see her?"

Very slowly Babbie climbed the stairs. I suppose she is he only person who was ever afraid of Margaret. Her irst knock on the bedroom door was so soft that Margaret, vho was sitting up in bed, did not hear it. When Babbie ntered the room, Margaret's first thought was that there ould be no other so beautiful as this, and her second was hat the stranger seemed even more timid than herself. After . few minutes' talk she laid aside her primness, a weapon he had drawn in self-defence lest this fine lady should iot understand the grandeur of a manse, and at a "Call me Babbie, won't you?" she smiled.

"That is what some other person calls you," said Margaret, archly. "Do you know that he took twenty minutes o say good-night? My dear," she added, hastily, misinterpreting Babbie's silence, "I should have been sorry had ie taken one second less. Every tick of the clock was a gossip, telling me how he loves you."

In the dim light a face that begged for pity was turned o Margaret.

"He does love you, Babbie?" she asked, suddenly doubtful.

Babbie turned away her face, then shook her head.

"But you love him?"

Again Babbie shook her head.

"Oh, my dear," cried Margaret, in distress, "if this s so, are you not afraid to marry him?"

She knew now that Babbie was crying, but she did not now why Babbie could not look her in the face.

"There may be times," Babbie said, most woful that she ad not married Rintoul, "when it is best to marry a man hough we do not love him."

"You are wrong, Babbie," Margaret answered, gravel "if I know anything at all, it is that."

"It may be best for others."

"Do you mean for one other?" Margaret asked, and t girl bowed her head. "Ah, Babbie, you speak like a child

"You do not understand."

"I do not need to be told the circumstances to kn this,—that if two people love each other, neither has a right to give the other up."

Babbie turned impulsively to cast herself on the mer of Gavin's mother, but no word could she say; a hot te fell from her eyes upon the coverlet, and then she look at the door, as if to run away.

"But I have been too inquisitive," Margaret began; wher upon Babbie cried, "Oh, no, no, no; you are very goo I have no one who cares whether I do right or wrong."

"Your parents—"

"I have had none since I was a child."

"It is the more reason why I should be your friend Margaret said, taking the girl's hand.

"You do not know what you are saying. You cannot my friend."

"Yes, dear, I love you already. You have a good fac Babbie, as well as a beautiful one."

Babbie could remain in the room no longer. She ba Margaret good-night, and bent forward to kiss her; th drew back, like a Judas, ashamed.

"Why did you not kiss me?" Margaret asked in surpri but poor Babbie walked out of the room without answerin

Of what occurred at the manse on the following da until I reached it, I need tell little more. When Babb was tending Sam'l Farquharson's child in the Tenement she learned of the flood in Glen Quharity, and that t greater part of the congregation had set off to the assistan of the farmers; but fearful as this made her for Gavin safety, she kept the new anxiety from his mother. D ceived by another story of Jean's, Margaret was the o happy person in the house.

"I believe you had only a lover's quarrel with Lord Rinto last night," she said to Babbie in the afternoon. "A you see I can guess what is taking you to the window often. You must not think him long in coming for you. can assure you that the rain which keeps my son from

nust be sufficiently severe to separate even true lovers. Take an old woman's example, Babbie. If I thought the minister's absence alarming, I should be in anguish; but as t is, my mind is so much at ease that, see, I can thread my needle."

CHAPTER XL.

MARGARET, THE PRECENTOR, AND GOD BETWEEN.

Unless Andrew Luke, who went to Canada, be still above ground, I am now the only survivor of the few to whom Lang Tammas told what passed in the manse parlour after the door closed on him and Margaret. With the years the others lost the details, but before I forget them the man who has been struck by lightning will look at his arm without remembering what shrivelled it.

"She was never the kind o' woman," Whamond said, "that a body need be nane feared at. You can see she is o' the timid sort. I couldna hae selected a woman easier to speak bold out to, though I had ha'en my pick o' them.

"But, man, she was so michty windy o' him. If he had wanted to put a knife into her, I believe that woman would just hae telled him to take care no to cut his hands. Ay, and what innocent-like she was! If she had heard enough, afore I saw her to make her uneasy, I could hae begun at once; but here she was, shaking my hand and smiling to me, so that aye when I tried to speak I gaed through ither. Nobody can despise me for it, I tell you, mair than I despise mysel'.

"I thocht to mysel', 'Let her hae her smile out, Tammas Whamond; it's her hinmost.' Syne wi' shame at my cowardliness, I tried to yoke to my duty as chief elder o' the kirk, and I said to her, as thrawn as I could speak, 'Dinna thank me; I've done nothing for you."

"'I ken it wasna for me you did it,' she said, 'but for him; but, oh, Mr. Whamond, will that make me think the less o' you? He's my all,' she says, wi' that smile back in her face, and a look mixed up wi't that said as plain, 'and I need no more.' I thocht o' saying that some builds their house upon the sand, but—dagont, dominie, it's a solemn thing the pride mithers has in their laddies. I mind aince my ain mither—what the devil are you glowering at, Andrew Luke? Do you think I'm greeting?

"'You'll sit down, Mr. Whamond,' she says next.

"No, I winna,' I said, angry-like. 'I didna come here to sit

"I could see she thocht I was shy at being in the mans parlour; ay, and I thocht she was pleased at me looking shy Weel, she took my hat out o' my hand, and she put it on the chair at the door, whaur there's aye an auld chair in gran houses for the servant to sit on at family exercise.

"'You're a man, Mr. Whamond,' says she, 'that the ministe delights to honour, and so you'll oblige me by sitting in hi own armchair.'

"I saw my chance at that," Whamond went on, "and I say to her, sternly, 'In worldly position,' I says, 'I'm a commo man, and it's no for the like o' sic to sit in a minister's chair but it has been God's will,' I says, 'to wrap around me the mantle o' chief elder o' the kirk, and if the minister falls awa frae grace, it becomes my duty to take his place.'

"If she had been looking at me, she maun hae grown feared at that, and syne I could hae gone on though my ilka word was a knock-down blow. But she was picking some things af the chair to let me down on't.

"'It's a pair o' mittens I'm working for the minister,' she says, and she handed them to me. Ay, I tried no to take them but— Oh, lads, it's queer to think how saft I was.

"'He's no to ken about them till they're finished,' she says terrible fond-like.

"The words came to my mouth, 'They'll never be finished, and I could hae cursed mysel' for no saying them. I dinna ken how it was, but there was something pitiful in seeing her take up the mittens and begin working cheerily at one, and me kenning all the time that they would never be finished. I watched her fingers, and I said to mysel', 'Another stitch, and that maun be your last.'

"In the tail o' the day I says, 'You needna bother; he'll never wear them,' and they sounded sic words o' doom that I rose up off the chair. Ay, but she took me up wrang, and she said, 'I see you have noticed how careless o' his ain comforts he is, and that in his zeal he forgets to put on his mittens, though they may be in his pocket a' the time. Ay,' says she, confident-like, 'but he winna forget these mittens, Mr. Whamond, and I'll tell you the reason: it's because they're his mother's work.'

"I stamped my foot, and she gae me an apologetic look, and says, 'I canna help boasting about his being so fond o' me.'

"Ay, but here was me saying to mysel', 'Do your duty

Tammas Whamond; you sluggard, do your duty,' and without lifting my een frae her fingers I said, sternly, 'The chances are,' I said, 'that these mittens will never be worn by the hands they are worked for.'

"'You mean,' says she, 'that he'll gie them awa to some ill-off body, as he gies near a' thing he has? Ay, but there's one thing he never parts wi', and that's my work. There's a young lady in the manse the now,' says she, 'that offered to finish the mittens for me, but he would value them less if I get ony other body put a stitch into them.'

"I thocht to mysel', 'Tammas Whamond, the Lord has opened a door to you, and you'll be disgraced for ever if you dinna walk straucht in.' So I rose again, and I says, boldly, this time, 'Whaur's that young leddy? I hae something to say to her that canna be kept waiting.'

"'She's up the stair,' she says, surprised, 'but you canna ken her, Mr. Whamond, for she just came last nicht.'

"'I ken mair o' her than you think,' says I; 'I ken what brocht her here, and ken wha she thinks she is to be married to, and I've come to tell her that she'll never get him.'

"'How no?' she said, amazed-like.

"'Because,' said I, wi' my teeth thegither, 'he is already married.'

"Lads, I stood waiting to see her fall, and when she didna fall I just waited langer, thinking she was slow in taking it a' in.

"'I see you ken wha she is,' she said, looking at me, and yet I canna credit your news.'

"'They're true,' I cries.

"'Even if they are,' says she, considering, 'it may be the best thing that could happen to baith o' them.'

"I sank back in the chair in fair bewilderment, for I didna ken at that time, as we a' ken now, that she was thinking o' the earl when I was thinking o' her son. Dominie, it looked to me as if the Lord had opened a door to me, and syne shut it in my face.

"Syne wi' me sitting there in a kind o' awe o' the woman's simpleness, she began to tell me what the minister was like when he was a bairn, and I was saying a' the time to mysel', 'You're chief elder o' the kirk, Tammas Whamond, and you maun speak out the next time she stops to draw breath.' They were terrible sma', common things she telled me, sic as near a' mithers minds about their bairns, but the kind o' coaxly way she said them drove my words down my throat, like

as if I was some infidel man trying to break out wi' blas phemy in a kirk.

"'I'll let you see something,' says she, 'that I ken wi interest you.' She brocht it out o' a drawer, and what d you think it was? As sure as death it was no more tha some o' his hair when he was a litlin, and it was tied u sic carefully in paper that you would hae thocht it was som valuable thing.

"'Mr. Whamond,' she says, solemnly, 'you've come thric to the manse to keep me frae being uneasy about my son absence, and you was the chief instrument under God i bringing him to Thrums, and I'll gie you a little o' that hair

"Dagont, what did I care about his hair? and yet to se her fondling it! I says to mysel', 'Mrs. Dishart,' I says t mysel', 'I was the chief instrument under God in bringin him to Thrums, and I've come here to tell you that I'm t be the chief instrument under God in driving him out o't Ay, but when I focht to bring out these words, my mout snecked like a box.

"'Dinna gie me his hair,' was a' I could say, and wouldna take it frae her; but she laid it in my hand, and— and syne what could I do? Ay, it's easy to speak about tha things now, and to wonder how I could hae so disgraced th position o' chief elder o' the kirk, but I tell you I was nea greeting for the woman. Call me names, dominie; I deserv them all."

I did not call Whamond names for being reluctant to brea Margaret's heart. Here is a confession I may make. Some times I say my prayers at night in a hurry, going on m knees indeed, but with as little reverence as I take a drin of water before jumping into bed, and for the same reaso because it is my nightly habit. I am only pattering wor I have by heart to a chair then, and should be as well en ployed writing a comic Bible. At such times I pray for th earthly well-being of the precentor, though he has been dea for many years.

"She said to me," Whamond continued, "that the wome o' the congregation would be fond to handle the hair. Cou I tell her that the women was waur agin him than the mer I shivered to hear her.

"'Syne when they're a' sitting breathless listening to h preaching,' she says, 'they'll be able to picture him as a bair just as I often do in the kirk mysel'.'

"Andrew Luke, you're sneering at me, but I tell you

ou had been there and had begun to say, 'He'll preach in ur kirk no more,' I would hae struck you.

"She says, 'Oh, Mr. Whamond, there's times in the kirk hen he is praying, and the glow on his face is hardly ortal, so that I fall a-shaking, wi' a mixture o' fear and ride, me being his mother; and sinful though I am to say it, canna help thinking at sic times that I ken what the mother Jesus had in her heart when she found Him in the temple.'

"Dominie, it's sax and twenty years since I was made an lder o' the kirk. I mind the day as if it was yestreen. Mr. arfrae made me walk hame wi' him, and he took me into ne manse parlour, and he set me in that very chair. It was ne first time I was ever in the manse. Ay, he little thocht nat day in his earnestness, and I little thocht mysel' in the ride o' my lusty youth, that the time was coming when I ould swear in that reverenced parlour. I say swear, domi- ie, for when she had finished I jumped to my feet, and I ried, 'Hell!' and I lifted up my hat. And I was chief elder.

"She fell back frae my oath," he said, "and syne she took ny sleeve and speired, 'What has come ower you, Mr. Wha- ond? Hae you onything on your mind?'

"'I've sin on it,' I roared at her. 'I have neglect o' duty n it. I am one o' them that cries "Lord, Lord," and yet o not the things which He commands. He has pointed ut the way to me, and I hinna followed it.'

"'What is it you hinna done that you should hae done?' he said. 'Oh, Mr. Whamond, if you want my help, it's yours.'

"'Your son's a' the earth to you,' I cried, 'but my elder hip's as muckle to me. Sax and twenty years hae I been n elder, and now I maun gie it up.'

"'Wha says that?' she speirs.

"'I say it,' I cried. 'I've shirked my duty. I gie up ny eldership now. Tammas Whamond is no langer an elder ' the kirk;' ay, and I was chief elder.

"Dominie, I think she began to say that when the minister ame hame he wouldna accept my resignation, but I paid o need to her. You ken what was the sound that keeped ny ears frae her words; it was the sound o' a machine oming yont the Tenements. You ken what was the sicht nat made me glare through the window instead o' looking t her; it was the sicht o' Mr. Dishart in the machine. I ouldna speak, but I got my body atween her and the window, or I heard shouting, and I couldna doubt that it was the folk ursing him.

"But she heard too, she heard too, and she squeezed by me to the window. I couldna look out; I just walked saft like to the parlour door, but afore I reached it she cried:

"'It's my son come back, and see how fond o' him they are! They are running at the side o' the machine, and the laddies are tossing their bonnets in the air.'

"'God help you, woman!' I said to mysel', 'it canna be bonnets,—it's stanes and divits mair likely that they're flinging at him.' Syne I creeped out o' the manse. Dominie, you mind I passed you in the kitchen, and didna say a word?"

Yes, I saw the precentor pass through the kitchen, with such a face on him as no man ever saw him wear again. Since Tammas Whamond died we have had to enlarge the Thrums cemetery twice; so it can matter not at all to him and but little to me, what you who read think of him. All his life children ran from him. He was the dourest, the most unlovable man in Thrums. But may my right hand wither, and may my tongue be cancer-bitten, and may my mind be gone into a dry rot before I forget what he did for me and mine that day!

CHAPTER XLI.

RAIN—MIST—THE JAWS.

To this day we argue in the glen about the sound mistaken by many of us for the firing of the Spittal cannon, some calling it thunder and others the tearing of trees in the torrent. I think it must have been the roll of stones into the Quharity from Silver Hill, of which a corner had been missing since that day. Silver Hill is all stones as if creation had been riddled there, and in the sun the mica on them shines like many pools of water.

At the roar, as they thought, of the cannon, the farmers looked up from their struggle with the flood to say, "That's Rintoul married," as clocks pause simultaneously to strike the hour. Then every one in the Glen save Gavin and myself was done with Rintoul. Before the hills had answered the noise, Gavin was on his way to the Spittal. The doctor must have been ten minutes in overtaking him, yet he maintained afterward that it was with him from the start. From this we see that the shock he had got carried him

some distance before he knew that he had left the schoolhouse. It also gave him a new strength, that happily lasted longer than his daze of mind.

Gavin moved northward quicker than I came south, climbing over or wading through his obstacles, while I went round mine. After a time, too, the dog proved useful, for on discovering that it was going homeward it took the lead, and several times drew him to the right road to the Spittal by refusing to accompany him on the wrong road. Yet in two hours he had walked perhaps nine miles without being four miles nearer the Spittal. In that flood the glen milestones were three miles apart.

For some time he had been following the dog doubtfully, for it seemed to be going too near the river. When they struck a cart-track, however, he concluded rightly that they were nearing a bridge. His faith in his guide was again tested before they had been many minutes on this sloppy road. The dog stopped, whined, looked irresolute, and then ran to the right, disappearing into the mist in an instant. He shouted to it to come back, and was surprised to hear a whistle in reply. This was sufficient to make him dash after the dog, and in less than a minute he stopped abruptly by the side of a shepherd.

"Have you brocht it?" the man cried, almost into Gavin's ear; yet the roar of the water was so tremendous that the words came faintly, as if from a distance. "Wae is me; is it only you, Mr. Dishart?"

"Is it only you!" No one in the glen would have addressed a minister thus except in a matter of life or death, and Gavin knew it.

"He'll be ower late," the shepherd exclaimed, rubbing his hands together in distress. "I'm speaking o' Whinbusses' grieve. He has run for ropes, but he'll be ower late."

"Is there some one in danger?" asked Gavin, who stood, he knew not where, with this man, enveloped in mist.

"Is there no? Look!"

"There is nothing to be seen but mist; where are we?"

"We're on the high bank o' the Quharity. Take care, man; you was stepping ower into the roaring water. Lie down and tell me if he's there yet. Maybe I just think that I see him, for the sicht is painted on my een."

Gavin lay prone and peered at the river, but the mist came up to his eyes. He only knew that the river was below from the sound.

"Is there a man down there?" he asked, shuddering.

"There was a minute syne; on a bit island."

"Why does he not speak?"

"He is senseless. Dinna move; the mist's clearing, and you'll see if he's there syne. The mist has been lifting and falling that way ilka minute since me and the grieve saw him."

The mist did not rise. It only shook like a blanket, and then again remained stationary. But in that movement Gavin had seen twice, first incredulously, and then with conviction.

"Shepherd," he said, rising, "it is Lord Rintoul."

"Ay, it's him; and you saw his feet was in the water. They were dry when the grieve left me. Mr. Dishart, the ground he is on is being washed awa bit by bit. I tell you the flood's greedy for him, and it'll hae him— Look, did you see him again?"

"Is he living?"

"We saw him move. Hst! Was that a cry?"

It was only the howling of the dog, which had recognised its master, and was peering over the bank, the body quivering to jump, but the legs restless with indecision.

"If we were down there," Gavin said, "we could hold him secure till rescue comes. It is no great jump."

"How far would you make it? I saw him again!"

"It looked farther that time."

"That's it! Sometimes the ground he is on looks so near that you think you could almost drop on it, and the next time it's yards and yards awa. I've stood ready for the spring, Mr. Dishart, a dozen times, but I aye sickened. I daurna do it. Look at the dog; just when it's starting to jump, it pulls itsel' back."

As if it had heard the shepherd, the dog jumped at that instant.

"It sprang too far," Gavin said.

"It didna spring far enough."

They waited, and presently the mist thinned for a moment, as if it was being drawn out. They saw the earl but there was no dog.

"Poor brute," said the shepherd, and looked with awe at Gavin.

"Rintoul is slipping into the water," Gavin answered. "You won't jump?"

"No, I'm wae for him, and—"

"Then I will," Gavin was about to say, but the shepherd continued, "And him only married twa hours syne."

That kept the words in Gavin's mouth for half a minute, and then he spoke them.

"Dinna think o't," cried the shepherd, taking him by the coat. "The ground he is on is slippery. I've flung a dozen stanes at it, and them that hit it slithered off. Though you landed in the middle o't, you would slide into the water."

"He shook himsel' free o' me," the shepherd told afterward, "and I saw him bending down and measuring the distance wi' his een as cool as if he was calculating a drill o' tatties. Syne I saw his lips moving in prayer. It wasna spunk he needed to pray for, though. Next minute there was me, my very arms prigging wi' him to think better o't, and him standing ready to loup, his knees bent, and not a tremble in them. The mist lifted, and I— Lads, I couldna gie a look to the earl. Mr. Dishart jumped; I hardly saw him, but I kent. I kent, for I was on the bank alane. What did I do? I flung mysel' down in a sweat, and if een could bore mist, mine would hae done it. I thocht I heard the minister's death-cry, and may I be struck if I dinna believe now that it was a skirl o' my ain. After that there was no sound but the jaw o' the water; and I prayed, but no to God, to the mist to rise, and after an awful time it rose, and I saw the minister was safe; he had pulled the earl into the middle o' the bit island, and was rubbing him back to consciousness. I sweat when I think o't yet.

"Though it seemed as lang time," the shepherd says, "as I could hae run up a hill in, I dinna suppose it was many minutes afore I saw Rintoul opening and shutting his een. The next glint I had o' them they were speaking to ane another; ay, and mair than speaking. They were quarrelling. I couldna hear their words, but there was a moment when I thocht they were to grapple. Lads, the memory o' that'll hing about my death-bed. There was twa men, edicated to the highest pitch, ane a lord and the other a minister, and the flood was taking awa a mouthful o' their footing ilka minute, and the jaws o' destruction was gaping for them, and yet they were near fechting. We ken now it was about a woman. Ay, but does that make it less awful?"

No, that did not make it less awful. It was even awful that Gavin's first words when Rintoul opened his eyes and closed them hastily were, "Where is she?" The earl did

not answer; indeed, for the moment the words had no meaning to him.

"How did I come here?" he asked, feebly.

"You should know better than I. Where is my wife?"

"I remember now," Rintoul repeated several times. "Yes I had left the Spittal to look for you,—you were so long in coming. How did I find you?"

"It was I who found you," Gavin answered. "You must have been swept away by the flood."

"And you, too?"

In a few words Gavin told how he came to be beside the earl.

"I suppose they will say you have saved my life," was Rintoul's commentary.

"It is not saved yet. If help does not come, we shall be dead men in an hour. What have you done with my wife?"

Rintoul ceased to listen to him, and shouted sums of money to the shepherd, who shook his head and bawled an answer that neither Gavin nor the earl heard. Across that thundering water only Gavin's voice could carry, the most powerful ever heard in a Thrums pulpit, the one voice that could be heard all over the Commonty during the time of the tent-preaching. Yet he never roared, as some preachers do of whom we say, "Ah, if they could hear the little minister's word!"

Gavin caught the gesticulating earl by the sleeve and said, "Another man has gone for ropes. Now, listen to me; how dared you go through a marriage ceremony with her, knowing her already to be my wife?"

Rintoul did listen this time.

"How do you know I married her?" he asked, sharply.

"I heard the cannon."

Now the earl understood, and the shadow on his face shook and lifted, and his teeth gleamed. His triumph might be short-lived, but he would enjoy it while he could.

"Well," he answered, picking the pebbles for his sling with care, "you must know that I could not have married her against her will. The frolic on the hill amused her, but she feared you might think it serious, and so pressed me to proceed with her marriage to-day despite the flood."

This was the point at which the shepherd saw the minister raise his fist. It fell, however, without striking.

"Do you really think that I could doubt her?" Gavin said,

compassionately, and for the second time in twenty-four hours the earl learned that he did not know what love is.

For a full minute they had forgotten where they were. Now, again, the water seemed to break loose, so that both remembered their danger simultaneously and looked up. The mist parted for long enough to show them that where had only been the shepherd was now a crowd of men, with here and there a woman. Before the mist again came between the minister had recognised many members of his congregation.

In his unsuccessful attempt to reach Whinbusses, the grieve had met the relief party from Thrums. Already the weavers had helped Waster Lunny to stave off ruin, and they were now on their way to Whinbusses, keeping together through fear of mist and water. Every few minutes Snecky Hobart rang his bell to bring in stragglers.

"Follow me," was all the panting grieve could say at first, but his agitation told half his story. They went with him patiently, only stopping once, and then excitedly, for they came suddenly on Rob Dow. Rob was still lying a prisoner beneath the tree, and the grieve now remembered that he had fallen over this tree, and neither noticed the man under it nor been noticed by the man. Fifty hands released poor Dow, and two men were commissioned to bring him along slowly while the others hurried to the rescue of the earl. They were amazed to learn from the shepherd that Mr. Dishart also was in danger, and after "Is there a woman wi' him?" some cried, "He'll get off cheap wi' drowning," and "It's the judgment o' God."

The island on which the two men stood was now little bigger than the round tables common in Thrums, and its centre was some feet farther from the bank than when Gavin jumped. A woman, looking down at it, sickened, and would have toppled into the water, had not John Spens clutched her. Others were so stricken with awe that they forgot they had hands.

Peter Tosh, the elder, cast a rope many times, but it would not carry. The one end was then weighted with a heavy stone, and the other tied round the waists of two men. But the force of the river had been underestimated. The stone fell short into the torrent, which rushed off with it so furiously that the men were flung upon their faces and trailed to the verge of the precipice. A score of per-

sons sprang to their rescue, and the rope snapped. There was only one other rope, and its fate was not dissimilar. This time the stone fell into the water beyond the island, and immediately rushed down the stream. Gavin seized the rope, but it pressed against his body, and would have pushed him off his feet had not Tosh cut it. The trunk of the tree that had fallen on Rob Dow was next dragged to the bank and an endeavour made to form a sloping bridge of it. The island, however, was now soft and unstable, and, though the trunk was successfully lowered, it only knocked lumps off the island, and finally it had to be let go, as the weavers could not pull it back. It splashed into the water, and was at once whirled out of sight. Some of the party on the bank began hastily to improvise a rope of cravats and the tags of the ropes still left, but the mass stood helpless and hopeless.

"You may wonder that we could have stood still, waiting to see the last o' them," Birse, the post, has said to me in the schoolhouse, "but, dominie, I couldna hae moved, magre my neck. I'm a hale man, but if this minute we was to hear the voice o' the Almighty saying solemnly, 'Afore the clock strikes again, Birse, the post, will fall down dead of heart disease,' what do you think you would do? I'll tell you. You would stand whaur you are, and stare, tongue-tied, at me till I dropped. How do I ken? By the teaching o' that nicht. Ay, but there's a mair important thing I dinna ken, and that is whether I would be palsied wi' fear like the earl, or face death with the calmness o' the minister."

Indeed, the contrast between Rintoul and Gavin was now impressive. When Tosh signed that the weavers had done their all and failed, the two men looked in each other's faces, and Gavin's face was firm and the earl's working convulsively. The people had given up attempting to communicate with Gavin save by signs, for though they heard his sonorous voice, when he pitched it at them, they saw that he caught few words of theirs. "He heard our skirls," Birse said, "but couldna grip the words ony mair than we could hear the earl. And yet we screamed, and the minister didna. I've heard o' Highlandmen wi' the same gift, so that they could be heard across a glen."

"We must prepare for death," Gavin said, solemnly, to the earl, "and it is for your own sake that I again ask you to tell me the truth. Worldly matters are nothing to either

of us now, but I implore you not to carry a lie into your Maker's presence."

"I will not give up hope," was all Rintoul's answer, and he again tried to pierce the mist with offers of reward. After that he became doggedly silent, fixing his eyes on the ground at his feet. I have a notion that he had made up his mind to confess the truth about Babbie when the water had eaten the island as far as the point at which he was now looking.

CHAPTER XLII.

END OF THE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

Out of the mist came the voice of Gavin, clear and strong: "If you hear me, hold up your hands as a sign."

They heard, and none wondered at his voice crossing the chasm while theirs could not. When the mist cleared, they were seen to have done as he bade them. Many hands remained up for a time because the people did not remember to bring them down, so great was the awe that had fallen on all, as if the Lord was near.

Gavin took his watch from his pocket, and he said:

"I am to fling this to you. You will give it to Mr. Ogilvy, the schoolmaster, as a token of the love I bear him."

The watch was caught by James Langlands, and handed to Peter Tosh, the chief elder present.

"To Mr. Ogilvy," Gavin continued, "you will also give the chain. You will take it off my neck when you find the body.

"To each of my elders, and to Hendry Munn, kirk officer, and to my servant Jean, I leave a book, and they will go to my study and choose it for themselves.

"I also leave a book for Nanny Webster, and I charge you, Peter Tosh, to take it to her, though she be not a member of my church.

"The pictorial Bible with 'To my son on his sixth birthday' on it, I bequeath to Rob Dow. No, my mother will want to keep that. I give to Rob Dow my Bible with the brass clasp.

"It is my wish that every family in the congregation should have some little thing to remember me by. This you will tell my mother.

"To my successor I leave whatsoever of my papers he may think of any value to him, including all my notes on Revelation, of which I meant to make a book. I hope he will never sing the paraphrases.

"If Mr. Carfrae's health permits, you will ask him to preach the funeral sermon; but if he be too frail, then you will ask Mr. Trail, under whom I sat in Glasgow. The illustrated 'Pilgrim's Progress' on the drawers in my bedroom belongs to Mr. Trail, and you will return it to him with my affection and compliments.

"I owe five shillings to Hendry Munn for mending my boots, and a smaller sum to Baxter, the mason. I have two pounds belonging to Rob Dow, who asked me to take charge of them for him. I owe no other man anything, and this you will bear in mind if Matthew Cargill, the flying stationer, again brings forward a claim for the price of Whiston's 'Josephus,' which I did not buy from him.

"Mr. Moncur, of Aberbrothick, had agreed to assist me at the Sacrament, and will doubtless still lend his services. Mr. Carfrae or Mr. Trail will take my place if my successor is not elected by that time. The Sacrament cups are in the vestry press, of which you will find the key beneath the clock in my parlour. The tokens are in the topmost drawer of my bedroom.

"The weekly prayer-meeting will be held as usual on Thursday at eight o'clock, and the elders will officiate.

"It is my wish that the news of my death be broken to my mother by Mr. Ogilvy, the schoolmaster, and by no other. You will say to him that this is my solemn request, and that I bid him discharge it without faltering and be of good cheer.

"But if Mr. Ogilvy be not now alive, the news of my death will be broken to my mother by my beloved wife. Last night I was married on the hill, over the tongs, but with the sanction of God, to her whom you call the Egyptian, and despite what has happened since then, of which you will soon have knowledge, I here solemnly declare that she is my wife, and you will seek for her at the Spittal or elsewhere till you find her, and you will tell her to go to my mother and remain with her always, for these are the commands of her husband."

It was then that Gavin paused, for Lord Rintoul had that to say to him which no longer could be kept back. All

the women were crying sore, and also some men whose eyes had been dry at the coffining of their children.

"Now I ken," said Cruickshanks, who had been an atheist, "that it's only the fool wha says in his heart, 'There is no God.'"

Another said, "That's a man."

Another said, "That man has a religion to last him all through."

A fourth said, "Behold, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

A fifth said, "That's our minister. He's the minister o' the Auld Licht kirk o' Thrums. Woe is me, we're to lose him."

Many cried, "Our hearts was set hard against him. O Lord, are You angry wi' Your servants that You're taking him frae us just when we ken what he is?"

Gavin did not hear them, and again he spoke:

"My brethren, God is good. I have just learned that my wife is with my dear mother at the manse. I leave them in your care and in His."

No more he said of Babbie, for the island was become very small.

"The Lord calls me hence. It is only for a little time I have been with you, and now I am going away, and you will know me no more. Too great has been my pride because I was your minister, but He who sent me to labour among you is slow to wrath; and He ever bore in mind that you were my first charge. My people, I must say to you, 'Farewell.'"

Then, for the first time, his voice faltered, and wanting to go on he could not. "Let us read," he said, quickly, "in the Word of God in the fourteenth of Matthew, from the twenty-eighth verse."

He repeated these four verses:

"'And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.

"'And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

"'But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

"'And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?'"

After this Gavin's voice was again steady, and he said,

"The sand-glass is almost run out. Dearly beloved, with what words shall I bid you good-bye?"

Many thought that these were to be the words, for the mist parted, and they saw the island tremble and half of it sink.

"My people," said the voice behind the mist, "this is the text I leave with you: 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.' That text I read in the flood, where the hand of God has written it. All the pound notes in the world would not dam this torrent for a moment, so that we might pass over to you safely. Yet it is but a trickle of water, soon to be dried up. Verily, I say unto you, only a few hours ago the treasures of earth stood between you and this earl, and what are they now compared to this trickle of water? God only can turn rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground. Let His Word be a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path; may He be your refuge and your strength. Amen."

This amen he said quickly, thinking death was now come. He was seen to raise his hands, but whether to Heaven or involuntarily to protect his face as he fell none was sure, for the mist again filled the chasm. Then came a clap of stillness. No one breathed.

But the two men were not yet gone, and Gavin spoke once more.

"Let us sing in the twenty-third Psalm."

He himself raised the tune, and so long as they heard his voice they sang:

"The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.

"My soul He doth restore again;
And me to walk doth make
Within the paths of righteousness
Ev'n for His own name's sake.

"Yea, though I walk in Death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill;
For Thou art with me; and Thy rod
And staff —"

But some had lost the power to sing in the first verse, and others at "Death's dark vale," and when one man found himself singing alone he stopped abruptly. This was because they no longer heard the minister.

"O Lord!" Peter Tosh cried, "lift the mist, for it's mair than we can bear."

The mist rose slowly, and those who had courage to look saw Gavin praying with the earl. Many could not look, and some of them did not even see Rob Dow jump.

For it was Dow, the man with the crushed leg, who saved Gavin's life, and flung away his own for it. Suddenly he was seen on the edge of the bank, holding one end of the improvised rope in his hand. As Tosh says:

"It all happened in the opening and shutting o' an eye. It's a queer thing to say, but though I prayed to God to take awa the mist, when He did raise it I couldna look. I shut my een tight, and held my arm afore my face, like ane feared o' being struck. Even when I daured to look, my arm was shaking so that I could see Rob both above it and below it. He was on the edge, crouching to leap. I didna see wha had haud o' the other end o' the rope. I heard the minister cry, 'No, Dow, no!' and it gae through me as quick as a stab that if Rob jumped he would knock them both into the water. But he did jump, and you ken how it was that he didna knock them off."

It was because he had no thought of saving his own life. He jumped, not at the island, now little bigger than the seat of a chair, but at the edge of it, into the foam, and with his arm outstretched. For a second the hand holding the rope was on the dot of land. Gavin tried to seize the hand; Rintoul clutched the rope. The earl and the minister were dragged together into safety, and both left the water senseless. Gavin was never again able to lift his left hand higher than his head. Dow's body was found next day near the schoolhouse.

CHAPTER XLIII.

TALK OF A LITTLE MAID SINCE GROWN TALL.

My scholars have a game they call "The Little Minister,' in which the boys allow the girls as a treat to join. Some of the characters in the real drama are omitted as of no

importance,—the dominie, for instance,—and the two best fighters insist on being Dow and Gavin. I notice that the game is finished when Dow dives from a haystack, and Gavin and the earl are dragged to the top of it by a rope. Though there should be another scene, it is only a marriage, which the girls have, therefore, to go through without the help of the boys. This warns me that I have come to an end of my story for all except my little maid. In the days when she sat on my knee and listened it had no end, for after I told her how her father and mother were married a second time she would say, "And then I came, didn't I? Oh, tell me about me!" So it happened that when she was no higher than my staff she knew more than I could write in another book, and many a time she solemnly told me what I had told her, as:

"Would you like me to tell you a story? Well, it's about a minister, and the people wanted to be bad to him, and then there was a flood, and a flood is lochs falling instead of rain, and so of course he was nearly drownded, and he preached to them till they liked him again, and so they let him marry her, and they like her awful, too, and, just think! it was my father; and that's all. Now tell me about grandmother when father came home."

I told her once again that Margaret never knew how nearly Gavin was driven from his kirk. For Margaret was as one who goes to bed in the daytime and wakes in it, and is not told that there has been a black night while she slept. She had seen her son leave the manse the idol of his people, and she saw them rejoicing as they brought him back. Of what occurred at the Jaws, as the spot where Dow had saved two lives is now called, she learned, but not that these Jaws snatched him and her from an ignominy more terrible than death, for she never knew that the people had meditated driving him from his kirk. This Thrums is bleak and perhaps forbidding, but there is a moment of the day when a setting sun dyes it pink, and the people are like their town. Thrums was never colder in times of snow than were his congregation to their minister when the Great Rain began, but his fortitude rekindled their hearts. He was an obstinate minister, and love had led him a dance, but in the hour of trial he had proved himself a man.

When Gavin reached the manse, and saw not only his mother but Babbie, he would have kissed them both; but Babbie could only say, "She does not know," and then run

away crying. Gavin put his arm round his mother, and drew her into the parlour, where he told her who Babbie was. Now Margaret had begun to love Babbie already, and had prayed to see Gavin happily married; but it was a long time before she went up-stairs to look for his wife and kiss her and bring her down. "Why was it a long time?" my little maid would ask, and I had to tell her to wait until she was old, and had a son, when she would find out for herself.

While Gavin and the earl were among the waters, two men were on their way to Mr. Carfrae's home, to ask him to return with them and preach the Auld Licht kirk of Thrums vacant; and he came, though now so done that he had to be wheeled about in a little coach. He came in sorrow, yet resolved to perform what was asked of him if it seemed God's will; but, instead of banishing Gavin, all he had to do was to remarry him and kirk him, both of which things he did, sitting in his coach, as many can tell. Lang Tammas spoke no more against Gavin, but he would not go to the marriage, and he insisted on resigning his eldership for a year and a day. I think he only once again spoke to Margaret. She was in the manse garden when he was passing, and she asked him if he would tell her now why he had been so agitated when he visited her on the day of the flood. He answered, gruffly, "It's no business o' yours." Doctor McQueen was Gavin's best man. He died long ago of scarlet fever. So severe was the epidemic that for a week he was never in bed. He attended fifty cases without suffering, but as soon as he had bent over Hendry Munn's youngest boys, who both had it, he said, "I'm smitted," and went home to die. You may be sure that Gavin proved a good friend to Micah Dow. I have the piece of slate on which Rob proved himself a good friend to Gavin; it was in his pocket when we found the body. Lord Rintoul returned to his English estates, and never revisited the Spittal. The last thing I heard of him was that he had been offered the Lord-Lieutenantship of a county, and had accepted it in a long letter, in which he began by pointing out his unworthiness. This undid him, for the Queen, or her councillors, thinking from his first page that he had declined the honour, read no further, and appointed another man. Waster Lunny is still alive, but has gone to another farm. Sanders Webster, in his gratitude, wanted Nanny to become Auld Licht, but she refused, say-

ing, "Mr. Dishart is worth a dozen o' Mr. Duthie, and I'm terrible fond o' Mrs. Dishart, but Established I was born and Established I'll remain till I'm carried out o' this house feet foremost."

"But Nanny went to heaven for all that," my little maid told me. "Jean says people can go to heaven though they are not Auld Lichts, but she says it takes them all their time. Would you like me to tell you a story about my mother putting glass on the manse dyke? Well, my mother and my father is very fond of each other, and once they was in the garden, and my father kissed my mother, and there was a woman watching them over the dyke, and she cried out—something naughty."

"It was Tibbie Birse," I said, "and what she cried was, 'Mercy on us, that's the third time in half an hour!' So your mother, who heard her, was annoyed, and put glass on the wall."

"But it's me that is telling you the story. You are sure you don't know it? Well, they asked father to take the glass away, and he wouldn't; but he once preached at mother for having a white feather in her bonnet, and another time he preached at her for being too fond of him. Jean told me. That's all."

No one seeing Babbie going to church demurely on Gavin's arm could guess her history. Sometimes I wonder whether the desire to be a gypsy again ever comes over her for a mad hour, and whether, if so, Gavin takes such measures to cure her as he threatened in Caddam Wood. I suppose not; but here is another story:

"When I ask mother to tell me about her once being a gypsy she says I am a bad 'quisitive little girl, and to put on my hat and come with her to the prayer-meeting; and when I asked father to let me see mother's gypsy frock he made me learn Psalm forty-eight by heart. But once I see'd it, and it was a long time ago, as long as a week ago. Micah Dow gave me rowans to put in my hair, and I like Micah because he calls me Miss, and so I woke in my bed because there was noises, and I ran down to the parlour, and there was my mother in her gypsy frock, and my rowans was in her hair, and my father was kissing her, and when they saw me they jumped; and that's all."

"Would you like me to tell you another story? It is about a little girl. Well, there was once a minister and his wife, and they hadn't no little girls, but just little boys, and God

was sorry for them, so He put a little girl in a cabbage in the garden, and when they found her they were glad. Would you like me to tell you who the little girl was? Well, it was me, and, ugh! I was awful cold in the cabbage. Do you like that story?"

"Yes; I like it best of all the stories I know."

"So do I like it, too. Couldn't nobody help loving me, 'cause I'm so nice? Why am I so fearful nice?"

"Because you are like your grandmother."

"It was clever of my father to know when he found me in the cabbage that my name was Margaret. Are you sorry grandmother is dead?"

"I am glad your mother and father were so good to her and made her so happy."

"Are you happy?"

"Yes."

"But when I am happy I laugh."

"I am old, you see, and you are young."

"I am nearly six. Did you love grandmother? Then why did you never come to see her? Did grandmother know you was here? Why not? Why didn't I not know about you till after grandmother died?"

"I'll tell you when you are big."

"Shall I be big enough when I am six?"

"No, not till your eighteenth birthday."

"But birthdays come so slow. Will they come quicker when I am big?"

"Much quicker."

On her sixth birthday Micah Dow drove my little maid to the schoolhouse in the doctor's gig, and she crept beneath the table and whispered:

"Grandfather!"

"Father told me to call you that if I liked, and I like," she said, when I had taken her upon my knee. "I know why you kissed me just now. It was because I looked like grandmother. Why do you kiss me when I look like her?"

"Who told you I did that?"

"Nobody didn't tell me. I just found out. I loved grandmother, too. She told me all the stories she knew."

"Did she ever tell you a story about a black dog?"

"No. Did she know one?"

"Yes, she knew it."

"Perhaps she had forgotten it?"

"No, she remembered it."

"Tell it to me."

"Not till you are eighteen."

"But will you not be dead when I am eighteen? When you go to heaven, will you see grandmother?"

"Yes."

"Will she be glad to see you?"

My little maid's eighteenth birthday has come, and I am still in Thrums, which I love, though it is beautiful to none, perhaps, save to the very done, who lean on their staves, and look long at it, having nothing else to do till they die. I have lived to rejoice in the happiness of Gavin and Babbie; and if at times I have suddenly had to turn away my head after looking upon them in their home surrounded by their children, it was but a moment's envy that I could not help. Margaret never knew of the dominie in the glen. They wanted to tell her of me, but I would not have it. She has been long gone from this world; but sweet memories of her still grow, like honeysuckle, up the white walls of the manse, smiling in at the parlour window and beckoning from the door, and for some filling all the air with fragrance. It was not she who raised the barrier between her and me, but God Himself; and to those who maintain otherwise, I say they do not understand the purity of a woman's soul. During the years she was lost to me her face ever came between me and ungenerous thoughts; and now I can say, all that is carnal in me is my own, and all that is good I got from her. Only one bitterness remains. When I found Gavin in the rain, when I was fighting my way through the flood, when I saw how the hearts of the people were turned against him,—above all, when I found Whamond in the manse,—I cried to God, making promises to Him, if He would spare the lad for Margaret's sake, and He spared him; but these promises I have not kept.

THE END

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